

Don't Get Excited

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Stay Calm, Keep Busy To Aid National Defense Says O. U. Psychologist

JUST as the passengers aboard a ship at sea become emotionally upset, even hysterical, during a severe storm, so the members of a society are likely to become highly emotional, illogical, and disorganized in the face of war clouds or any other movement that seems to threaten their accustomed ways of life. To accuse people of becoming irrational in their behavior when their security is threatened is not to deny the danger. On the contrary, it is an acknowledgment of the genuineness of the danger.

If there is ever a time when the safety of the passengers aboard ship depends upon cool, deliberate conduct on the part of everyone, it is during a violent storm. In like manner, if there is ever a time which demands the wisest, the calmest, the most clear-headed guidance and decisions, it is when we are called upon to preserve the cherished rights, privileges and values of our social order from destruction by threatening forces of war and foreign ideologies; that is, the greater the danger, the greater the need for sanity and poise.

To counsel wisdom in the place of emotion is not to approve or to protect the enemy in our midst. In fact, it does just the opposite. It says, in effect, do not allow sentimentality or prejudice to get in the way of dealing with the agents of the enemy in the ways which the laws and the customs of our society decree. We must be sure that they are the enemy's agents and not just someone who happens to disagree with us but whose loyalty and willingness to sacrifice is just as great as our own.

However, with every national crisis, whether due to a threat from without or from within, the members of any society are likely to endanger their own institutions by their unguarded doings. They are in danger of surrendering rights, of approving laws, and of performing acts which they would not do, were they less excited. When

the danger has passed, they will want to forget their own acts and to recover what they willingly surrender in the heat of emotion. Fortunately man can forget very much; it is sometimes much less easy to recover what has been lost.

To be sure, it is often desirable not to return to the exact place from which we started on our emotional spree. Every national crisis should teach its lessons; lessons which if heeded will strengthen the basic structure of our social order, rather than weaken it. Neither will these lessons be learned nor will the weaknesses be remedied by distraught people. If we gain anything from these sad experiences it will be because someone kept cool, retained his ability to discriminate between the important and the relatively unimportant, and preserved his sense of relative values so that he did not allow the means to an end to destroy the end. In trying to save our ship we must not ourselves destroy it.

To tell our people to keep calm during times of stress may be about as useless as it is to tell a chronic worrier to stop worrying. Neither the worrier nor the emotionally disturbed individual will take heed and mend his ways. This does not remove the need for treatment in both cases. If we are to do our duty we must continue to suggest a calmer, more rational way, of living.

A little inquiry will reveal the basic causes for the emotion and irrationality that overtake us in times of danger. One of the basic causes of fear is insecurity. A young infant is afraid when threatened with physical insecurity by having all support removed from under it. As adults, we are just as much disturbed by threatened economic or social insecurity as is the infant when it has all the props knocked from under it. War and foreign doctrines endanger both our economic and our social security. However, we shall not render much aid unto ourselves by becoming panicky.

Another very strong value which seems to be in danger when war threatens is that which clusters about home ties. We are a patriotic people. Nevertheless, when we anticipate the call of father, husband, or son into service, we become upset unless we have a tight grip on ourselves. The ties of blood are strong and when threatened the result is a state of anxiety and persistent



Getting excited or worried about the war situation is a poor way to aid the national defense program.

fear which undermines resolution and courage.

This devastating anxiety which saps vitality and energy, confuses aims, usurps the throne of reason, and eats at our vitals, is due in large part to uncertainty. Like the child in the dark, we do not know what lies ahead. Suspense is added to fear and uncertainty. The strains of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty become bed fellows as well as constant daily companions. There is no relaxation, no rest, no time for recovery. We become jittery; we see a boggybo standing behind every tree and crouched in every shadow. The result, suspicion.

When suspicion emerges, reason takes a vacation at some unannounced place. Fear, which has been called the most disintegrating form of experience known to mankind, has pretty well completed its work of destruction. We are ready to deny to anyone upon whom our suspicion may fall, the very rights and privileges which we would defend with our lives, if need actually arose. The unfortunate thing is that we are almost sure to suspect anyone who disagrees with us. Especially are we likely to suspect those who do not share our emotions; those who remain calm and rational; those who, in the end, must be our saviors, if we are to be saved from grave consequences.

STILL another factor needs to be mentioned. Behavior is even more contagious than is a virulent epidemic of scarlet fever. Let one brave courageous man appear on the bridge of a floundering ship and begin to issue orders which demand coordinated action and what is the result? Panic and cowardice give way to orderly rescue. Let one person possessed by gloom enter a room where a gay party is in progress and every person present becomes fit for a funeral. In the same way our fears and suspicions are transmitted to those with whom we come into contact. Like the proverbial rotten apple, one jittery person can disturb the peace and calm of a whole group.

What, if anything, can each one of us as an individual do to preserve his sanity and to avoid fear, anxiety, and suspicion when such deep rooted values as those that relate to his economic system, his democratic society, and his near relatives are threatened?

Flagwaving, shouting, and mumbling of pledges are of little value. They may serve the same purpose as does the whistling of a young boy scared half out of his wits by a noise in the dark. We must be ready and completely willing to go through these ritualistic performances if outside conditions demand it, but if we have to bolster our own loyalty and courage by such acts an outsider might legitimately question the adequacy of both our loyalty and our courage. People resort to some form of substitute behavior only when normally acceptable modes of conduct fail to bring satisfaction. When a boy fails in his social life, or in his school work, he resorts to bullying, daydreaming, or some form of compensatory behavior. In

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tutions complement tax-supported higher education and deserve any encouragement the State can give has been an integral part of the coordination movement for the last ten years. x x x Details of the affiliation of private institutions must be worked out gradually after the State System of Higher Education has been launched."

7. "The heart of the System is represented by the chief executive officer employed by the State Regents and responsible to that Board for administering its program. The selection of the chancellor of higher education is undoubtedly the most important single responsibility of the board. x x x Assisting the chancellor would be an Institutional Cabinet, composed of the presidents of colleges and universities in the System. The cabinet could authoritatively advise with the chancellor and the regents, pass upon the facts as presented to them, warn of ill-advised regulations, standards, or other proposals, and in general represent the several institutions fairly and effectively."

8. "It is all-important x x x that first, the major functions of each different institution or group of similar institutions be decided; that, second, the organization of administrative and curricular divisions essential to carrying out these functions and only these, be set up and all others eliminated; and, third, that the straying of the institution from the functional aim allotted be prevented."

9. "The State Regents might well consider the advisability of turning over to subdivisions of the State government the physical properties of the separate junior colleges, and of recommending to the Legislature a unit of subsidy for junior colleges operated by local communities as a part of their secondary systems. The subsidy would be granted, of course, under safeguards providing for the maintenance of adequate standards of local support. x x x In no case should the state furnish any junior college building or equip it."

10. "The plan outlined is not advanced as a panacea for all of the state's problems in higher education. It does embody, however, essential features of the more successful attempts to coordinate the work of separate institutions of higher learning. It calls for drastic changes in present organization—but half-way measures adopted in the past have failed to accomplish the end in view."

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like manner when fear and distrust arise in our lives we turn, for satisfaction, from normal to abnormal modes of conduct.

A much more wholesome type of adjustment when danger threatens and fear assails is the assumption of an objective attitude and the vigorous performance of worthwhile tasks. As long as we keep our personal feelings, prejudices, and egoism at the center of all our thoughts and actions we

close the door to facts and to the processes of logical reasoning. To the degree that we get our egos out of the picture and view the situation in an objective way, we open the door to facts and to reason. The first injunction is to marshal all the facts available, ruling out hearsay, prejudice, bias and personal feelings. When the facts are all assembled, weigh them in a calm, logical manner giving to each its due weight.

As alumni of our university this should not be too difficult, for it has been shown by experiments that people with relatively high intelligence and with advanced scholastic training are less subject to suggestion and to group biases than are those with relatively low intelligence and with little schooling.

The old phrase, an idle brain is the devil's workshop, does contain an element of truth. The man who is busy at a worthwhile job has no time for brooding, worry, and fear. Fortunately, we cannot perform two major operations at the same time. If we are interestedly engaged at one task, we must lay other tasks aside. Also action produces growth and organization. The more we act in a logical, useful manner the more we become organized to function in that way, and, consequently, the easier it is to avoid fear, anxiety, and suspicion. Our character and personality gradually assume the same nature as that possessed by our behavior.

The second injunction is, do not stop with arguing logically with yourself and others, but realize the fruits of your logic through constructive action.

If this and the preceding injunctions are followed in spirit as well as in form, we shall have far greater satisfaction as individuals, we shall with certainty preserve the essential values of our culture, and we shall most effectively create a state of mental as well as material preparedness.

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Harry Ray Cook, '40bus, Oklahoma City, second lieutenant in the Reserve Corps, has been called to extended active duty at Fort Sill.

DAVIS-MORTON: Miss Frankie Pauline Davis, '40ed.m, and Thomas Morton, '40eng, were married Thanksgiving day in Wewoka. He is a member of Sigma Chi fraternity. They live in Nowata, where he is employed in the production department of the Oklahoma Oil Corporation.

FINLEY-HOYT: Miss Helen Finley and Eugene Hoyt, '40, were married December 19 in Oklahoma City. She attended Central State College. They live in Great Bend, Kansas, where he is connected with the Continental Oil Company.

GOLDSMITH-STREETS: Miss Armyn Goldsmith, '40, and George Streets were married in December. She is director of the Grant County Welfare Department. He attended junior college at Tonkawa. They live at Pond Creek, where he is editor and publisher of the *Pond Creek Herald*.

Alton Coppage, '40, and Mrs. Coppage, returned to Oklahoma in December from Chicago, Illinois, where he has completed his first season as a professional football player with the Chicago Cardinals. He was starting wingman in eight of eleven games. The couple will be at home temporarily in Norman, where he will continue work toward a degree. Mr. Coppage plans to return to professional football next season.

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