

In case you(r) mind...

If you ask me, after two decades of my association with Psychiatry... have you understood the exact nature of mind? I will have to shake my head with a forceful denial. No, these years have taught me a great deal about human mind. But, they have also pointed out to the fact that so much, so much remains to be learnt about it.

I have observed human mind at its best and at its worst.... Both these stages have equally stunned me and educated me. I have seen drug addicts and alcoholics compromising on basic human values without a blink of an eyelid... and, I have seen them emerge as people of integrity from that 'rock bottom'. I have observed intensely violent people from close quarters and I have seen the kindest of smiles on the same faces.

All this has taught me certain things. One, BEHAVIOR is only expression of mind for all of us. This available behavior can be at times very simple & at times very complex. And there are times when the inner mind tries to fool self and others through this behavior.

So behavior needs a student who has a keen sense of observation and one who can creatively deduce from the observations. Yet, this student needs to have a warm heart and gentle analytical ability. And he needs to remind himself almost at all steps, behavior is equal to man but one behavior is not equal to entire man.

So, one accepts a simple functional definition of mind. The basic unit of mind is the neuron. It is at the same time a unit of both nervous system and mind. The concrete functions come under nervous system and the abstract ones come under mind. Such functions are integrated with each other. As it is impossible to separate tea extract, milk, sugar, water from the prepared tea, it is impossible to separate them. Yet, as each ingredient can remind us of its own 'flavour' in the tea, individual systems of the mind continue to show their separate impact.

Thinking, emotions perceptions motivation intelligence, memory, judgment had insight are the major systems of the mind and they can function based on the level of consciousness, one more important system.

Each system has got its strong and weak points, in each one of us. Therefore perfect mind is a myth. People who first understand and then accept their strong and weak points can have more purposeful and happy life than others but it may not still be called 'perfect' or 'cent percent correct'.

Incompleteness is a human tendency. Realizing it is human strength. This means that apparently the 'stablest' and 'strong minded' people can have their moments of weakness and vice-versa. In those people, in whom these moments of weakness are intense, persistent, pervasive are called mentally disturbed. Such phases have a deep and long-term impact on their functioning as well as relationships. Therefore mental illness is not a static or eternal state but is dynamic. So is mental health.

One has to recognize the dynamic How of mental processes and then try to regulate its energies. Rather than trying to abolish negative emotions and thoughts it is better to change them and thus

regulate them. Our goal should never be 'getting rid of tension' but 'dealing with stress to get it to optimum levels'.

If depression is a state of mind, so is happiness. And, external circumstances can contribute towards these states but it is the person's attitude that defines them. A person who is alone may or may not be lonely. It depends on the friendship that he has with himself. Similarly a person even amidst his near and dear one's can be very lonely. So, 'being alone' and 'being lonely' are two different attitudes, first close to meditation and second closer to medication.

In other words, acknowledging and accepting all negative emotions in life is the first step in becoming happy. There are some useful negative emotions helping us to keep us on our goal and reminding us to continue to do our best. So, all negative emotions are not necessarily 'bad' and all positive emotions are not necessarily 'good'. A person who can discern between these can be said to have a stable state of mind. Mind you, it is not stable mind but stable state of mind.