

# EDITORIAL

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*“Even thee, at times...”*

In folk-speak from a dimly remembered past comes, in essence, the following, “Everybody is peculiar except thee and me, and even thee, at times, seem a bit strange.”

A philosopher of no less stature than Aristotle said, “No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness.”

And Horace, the Roman lyric poet and satirist who lived and died before the birth of Christ but is still remembered, went so far as to declare, “I teach that all men are mad.”

Therefore, it should come as no great surprise that a \$15 million, five-year study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (and not yet complete) reveals that one-fifth of all adult Americans are crazy.

The survey, the most comprehensive ever conducted in this country, indicates that at any given time, 19% of us over the age of 18 are suffering from one or more psychiatric disorders, that our illnesses may be mild or severe, transient or long-term, and that fewer than 20 in 100 persons so afflicted are seeking professional assistance.

Among problems counted as mental disorders are depression, mania, drug and alcohol abuse, and anxieties including those characterized by phobias and irrational panics. These, together with more disabling mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, may afflict any of us to varying degrees during stressful times in our lives. For most, depressions and anxieties, although uncomfortable, are manageable; and for most, they are of short duration. Experience has taught us that in all probability we shall soon feel better, so comparatively few of us seek professional help. We live with

Drug and alcohol abuse are widespread in our society and only some of those most severely affected make efforts to obtain help...those who do, like others with serious problems that continue over long periods, that grow more rather than less painful, and that interfere with normal functioning, often find therapy can bring remarkable relief. When your tooth hurts, you see your dentist. Severe stomach cramps send you to your physician. Long-lasting mental distresses call for psychiatry. All of us know people who have been, at one time or another, mental patients. It's no disgrace.

Should you believe that nobody you know ever has or ever will need a psychiatrist, keep in mind that one in every five adult Americans suffers from a mental disorder. The law of averages ordains that 20 United States senators should probably be seeing a shrink, and that between 80 and 100 members of the House of Representatives are emotionally disturbed.

According to the study, only four of the 20-in-100 who could be helped are receiving therapy. That means the other 16 are muddling along as best they can. They raise their kids, drive cars, ride buses and subways, work in offices and shops, and are out there rubbing elbows with everyone else... the sane and the not-so-sane.

Is that scary? It shouldn't be. Even though 30 million Americans may be mentally ill on any given day, it is unlikely the incidence is any higher now than it has ever been. When you come right down to it, it's surprising the study doesn't show the percentage is a great deal higher. Sometimes... even thee seem a bit strange...