

## SLEEPLESSNESS

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Sleeplessness may be the consequence of an organic illness, as, for instance, patients are sometimes sleepless in the early stages of typhoid fever; it may occur in disorders of the glands and in some cases of nephritis; and it plays a big part in the beginning of some cases of insanity. But insomnia can be explained psychologically if we can exclude an organic reason. Then we must look into the whole personality and we will find that this sleeplessness fits in perfectly with the whole personality. If you want to find out how it fits in with the whole personality, you can ask the person who suffers from sleeplessness: "What could you do if you could sleep?" Then he will tell of what he is afraid to do: e.g. if he could sleep he could work better and could take his examination. He is so afraid of his problem that he is tense; and this mental tension will not let him relax and, thus, he cannot sleep. Sleep is not a passive state, and it is not true that we are passive when we sleep. So far as our understanding goes, sleep is an activity; we have to do it and have to make ourselves sleep. We are trained in the very beginning to accomplish that and, therefore, it happens easily. There are always some reasons if we fail to accomplish it; and especially emotions and tensions are able to disturb the sleep. If a person is afraid of something, he may not sleep. Some patients, especially women, cannot sleep because they think of their housekeeping, whether it is in the best order. You can see that, because what do they do when they do not sleep? They think of housekeeping, of the party tomorrow, whether they will be criticized, or whether everything will be as it should be. In this way they cannot sleep. And once they cannot sleep, due to the tension, they discover in many cases that it has its advantages.

A man who had been suffering from a compulsive neurosis insisted that he could not sleep since his early childhood. The most he slept was only one or two

\*) We feel justified in publishing these rather informal remarks, as they remind us of the informal and personal way in which Adler spoke to us, his students. R.D.

hours. This is probably not true, as many people are wrong in their belief that they have not slept. Some admit that they do not know whether they had slept or not, but many patients are satisfied if they impress themselves and others that they had not slept. Therefore, they seek always an argument and alibi. They can claim attention because they themselves are impressed with their inability to sleep. Some people sleep and still hear and see everything. They are easily awakened and therefore notice everything that goes on--the striking of the clock, the passing by of a person or whatever it may be. They really are not refreshed in the morning and, therefore, this way of spending the night is only a variety of sleeplessness. There are many ways in which people can find an excuse in the same manner as if they have not slept.

You will find that every person who does not sleep has a certain purpose, in which he is supported by not sleeping. This boy (referring to a presented case) fights with his family. He does not earn money, because in this way he hurts them as they need his income. When he cannot sleep, they know what it means and begin to tremble; and this is his purpose. You can see therefore how he uses his sleeplessness.

You will always find another person involved. The sleeplessness is an effective way of hitting at this other person, who usually is near by. Married men and women hit at wives and husbands.

Sometimes sleeplessness is a tool of competition --at least it can be used for this purpose. "I know I do my job well and everybody is satisfied with my work; but what could I not accomplish if I could have more sleep!" Therefore, you find sleeplessness among very ambitious persons.

I was proud when I discovered that sleeplessness was a symptom of ambition. Then I found out that this was known two thousand years ago. Reading Horace, I found the following words: "Ah, these people, too, cannot sleep at night. They are the people who try so hard that reality should agree with their own plans, and do not want to adjust their own plans to reality." Horace has known the meaning of sleeplessness, and probably

everybody knew it at this time and it had only been forgotten. It has been rediscovered, as probably much other knowledge has been forgotten and must be discovered again. Horace also remarked about the people whom he mentioned before: "They do not suffer from sleeplessness alone, but also from headache." That is very true and you find these two often together. The result of such a high ambition is sleepless nights and headaches. We can understand that. If somebody must use the night for conscious thinking, if he is not satisfied to use only the day for this purpose, then it can be assumed that he is a very ambitious person. It is only a variation of a type who studies during the night; that is also a sign of ambition, only in this case it is not difficult to understand the connection.

But you can probe whether our assumption is right by asking the patient in a subtle manner: "What are you thinking about if you do not sleep during the night?" Then you will get another proof. The patient thinks always either of his business or his duties, and repeats what happened the day before. As he may go over his accounts and books in the evening, so he does it during the night to see whether he acted the right way. Many persons behave in this manner. Their ambition does not let them forget the slightest mistake they may have made the day before.

The illness in which sleeplessness plays the most important role is melancholia. If a melancholic person is not sly enough to hide what he is thinking during the night, then you can see easily the consequence in his temper and mood in the morning. He was collecting, like a bee, all the bad things he could think of. This inclination is very important to remember for the treatment. We must show the patient that he tries continuously to pick out bad things. In that way he arouses feelings and emotions which constitute melancholia. Melancholic depression means really to look for bad possibilities and not for anything which is promising and hopeful. This looking for uncomfortable thoughts occurs also during the night and so we understand why the melancholic patient does not sleep. In an ambitious way he collects. He could not continue this collecting if he were to fall asleep. Therefore with the emotion which he creates, he disturbs his sleep.

This activity during the night can be used in the treatment of melancholia and sleeplessness. When such a person meets a friend he complains about his sleeplessness and maintains that he is lost because without sleep he cannot go on any longer. If you tell him it is not important that he cannot sleep, that you do not sleep longer, and others you know don't sleep much more either, then the patient becomes angry and feels misunderstood, even insulted. He wants your sympathy and kindness--that alone makes an impression on him.

It is possible, however, to tell such a person to use the time in which he cannot sleep for the treatment. He can be told to collect all the thoughts which he has during the night to remember them and to tell them the next day at the consultation. In that way the patient can make use of his sleeplessness by helping the therapy. It will be a new experience for him to use his sleeplessness in a constructive way. Sometimes he cannot maintain his sleeplessness if it can be used for a good cause. He can remain sleepless only if he regards it as a disturbance. In either case, if he remembers his thoughts or if he now falls asleep, he may be able to recognize the purpose of sleep or sleeplessness. He may even understand that his sleeplessness has not played the role which he believed it did.

I never give a patient a prescription against sleeplessness; but I have seen many patients who come to me with medicines they received from others. And it is difficult to stop them from taking it. To have a medicine is merely the same power, the same thing, as not to sleep. It means, "I am sleepless and can only sleep taking drugs." He could sleep if he would take sugar water and believe in it. Sometimes it is possible to prove that. But I never try to fool a patient.

It is very interesting to observe how many people disturb their sleep by using certain rules. One of the best methods to disturb the sleep is to count to a thousand and then back. It takes two hours, and in these two hours the person has not slept. Yet he believes it is a means against sleeplessness, while it actually creates it. When he is not satisfied to find himself after these two hours still sleepless, then he says: "Even such a powerful means could not help in my case; I must

be terribly sick." To go from one doctor to the other is also a very good method to increase sleeplessness and to get attention on the side. Some people insist that they cannot sleep until one o'clock; or they cannot sleep without playing cards until two o'clock. All of these rules are excuses and add to the significance of sleeplessness.

Many persons spend their lives concerned with the disturbance of their sleep. It is like claiming a privilege. A person who cannot sleep must be considered in a different way. Everybody can see that he could accomplish much more if he only could sleep. Therefore, he has a certain privilege and cannot be measured with the same gauge as others. We doubt whether he really could accomplish more. In the therapy we make him understand that it is not entirely true that he would accomplish more if he would sleep. Amount of sleep and accomplishment are not related and cannot be measured by each other. But many connect the two. They insist that they can sleep only if they do not drink black coffee, or if they drink liquor. With this assumption they regulate sleep as they need it. They arrange their sleeplessness when they are not sure of success, if they need an alibi for an expected failure. In that way they combine two things which have nothing to do with each other. Sleeplessness occurs only in a situation in which a person is confronted with a problem for which he is not prepared.

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### CLASS ROOM DISCIPLINE

#### WILLARD BEECHER

The most precious possession of an individual is his "sense of importance." No one can long bear the feeling of being insignificant. When something happens to make one feel belittled in his own estimation, there is always an effort to build up as quickly as possible the damaged feeling of self-esteem. Mark Twain says in his essay, "What Is Man?" that "from his cradle to his grave a man never does a single thing which has any first and foremost object but one--to secure peace of mind, spiritual comfort, for HIMSELF." The child who is