

Lecture: Handling Psychotics

Hubbard lectures on procedures for handling psychotics. He talks about Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichmann's method of handling psychotics.

Note: Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichmann worked as a psychiatrist at Chestnut Lodge in Rockville MD, about twenty miles from Washington, DC.

There are many, many ways of approaching a psychotic and gaining access to him. Homer Lane, a layman over in England, went into one of the large sanitariums there and asked the superintendent if he could be given the worst psychotic they had in the place. He was told, "Oh, no, we wouldn't be permitted to do that."

"Well, just give me one of your very bad, hopeless psychotics."

"Oh, no, we couldn't do that. No, he—he—he'd kill you."

And Lane said, "Well now, I'll take that responsibility. I'll give you a release. After all, if he's hopeless I can't do him any harm. So let me talk to him for a little while."

Finally the superintendent gave way. They let Homer Lane, who was not a very big man, into a dark dungeon, and there, naked, dirty and frothing, standing about six foot six and weighing about 250 pounds, was a howling, screaming maniac. Homer Lane let himself into the cell very quietly and stood there. This shaggy thing looked at him and started to jump.

Homer Lane said, "I heard you could help me."

The maniac stopped in mid-flight and said lucidly, "How did you know?" They released that man in a couple of days.

This gives you a sample of some of the bizarre methods that can be adopted to regain accessibility.

Another one is followed by Dr. Frieda Fromm Reichman. She will go into a cell with the toughest, meanest, orneriest psychotics imaginable, and by a process of acting crazier than they act bring them out of it. That's right. There's nothing wrong with her nerve. I admire her a great deal. I know of her record, and it is amazing how she has been able to work with practically no tools but her own wits and actually get remissions from these people.

There are just tons of these tricks and ways to do it. But these things never deviate from the principle of getting into communication, by any means whatsoever, with basic personality.

Under no circumstances appoint yourself the taskmaster of a psychotic. Never give way to a punishment complex. Have a full confidence within yourself that you are going to produce marked results with this person. If you let your own guts begin to quiver, you are going to fail.

These methods, no matter how bizarre, do not depart from this short list. Nobody ever cured psychotics by screaming at them, beating them, or doing other very bad things to them.

You will hear an occasional story about somebody who walked in saying he was going to shoot this catatonic schizophrenic, and then got a gun and the catatonic schiz jumped up. That sounds good but the chances are he might have triggered this fellow further. This is not a 100 percent workable solution.

Building a fire under a catatonic schiz is spectacular, but he is liable to lie right there and be burned. He knows you are not going to kill him. You mustn't overlook these facts.

There are some methods of gaining accessibility which you would not ordinarily expect. Occasionally just by walking the legs off the psychotic, you'll get him so tired that he will go to sleep, get some rest and wake up accessible.

Often it is very hard to get into communication with these people. It does no good usually to tell them that they have great responsibilities of their own and they ought to snap to, as that is what they are running away from. People sometimes do a lot of arguing with psychotics about the great responsibilities which are awaiting them. Of course the psychotic just retreats further and further. He doesn't want anything to do with these responsibilities.

Another means of gaining accessibility has to do with drugs. Someone who wants to gain accessibility with a psychotic via drugs should stay solidly in the field of stimulants and away from sedatives. It is amazing what a stimulant will do to return accessibility to lots of cases. A psychotic who could not even talk to you will suddenly be in communication after Benzedrine starts taking effect. Now, what is said to him does not make new engrams nor new locks. He is accessible and you can talk to him.

In other words, a psychotic can either be depressed by use of a sedative into a stupefied state where everything that is said to him or around him or done to him while he is worked with will be knocked right in there with the rest of the engrams, or he can be given a stimulant and brought up to a level where his accessibility will often return, and he can be processed while in that state. There are several stimulants. Benzedrine and Dexedrine are two, and lacking everything else, just simply enough hot coffee will sometimes produce results. The alerting of the body also alerts BP, and BP can be brought up to a point sometimes where he can take care of it.

— L. Ron Hubbard

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