

WELLESLEY COLLEGE
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

June 14, 1929.

Miss Sda Tarbell,
120 East 19th St., New York City.

My dear Miss Tarbell;

Dr. Broyles tells me that you wish some expression of opinion concerning our mental hygiene experiences at Wellesley. I am sure you will agree that it is impossible to make very definite statements about the emotional experiences of various individuals.

As to crushes, they seem to be very common states at some period of most lives. Usually they are outgrown without difficulty and the person regards them merely as childish experiences. I think they should be so regarded but surely very often the individual needs tactful and sympathetic explanation of this emotional state if a more or less prolonged fixation at this level of emotional development is to be avoided. As in most situations in which mental hygiene should be of service, tactful dealing with the individual is distinctly preferable ~~than~~ to general instruction on this subject but lectures or books may be very useful in creating a more wholesome group attitude and making it easier for the student to come for more specific help. The most serious situations are often created by over emphasis of the subject and the emotion becomes almost an obsession with attending fears of abnormality. They seem to be most marked where there has been undue dependence on the family or parents or where there has been little demonstration of affection ~~in~~ the home. The latter seems to be the most difficult to handle.

As to the unhappiness of young people we must again consider the individ-

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ual case. It is surely not based upon material disadvantages nor upon lack of family affection. Unhappiness of the parents and discord between them is a common cause of a pessimistic and unhappy attitude toward life in the young. Very often these factors seem to be exaggerated but may be equally serious in their effects. The egotistic emphasis of modern life is a cause in itself of unhappiness. The great conflict of late adolescence is between the egotism of childhood and the establishment adult interest in others or in creative activities. In many cases it seems to be hard road to climb and the more spoiled the child the more difficult the road.

I feel quite sure that the unhappiness which in some instances leads to suicide must be a lack of appreciation of the real values of life and a grave deficiency in a sense of proportion as to their various emotional problems. Much of this is natural and the great problem for those of us who are trying to help the young people find their way is to help them to gain a sense of proportion and of real values.

This all seems very vague but I do not know how to be clearer. I am sure these children need a sympathetic attitude on our part and the vast majority find their way to a goodly measure of success and happiness.

Hoping this may be some help in your studies of college conditions,

I am very truly yours

Elizabeth L. Martin M.D.
Consultant in mental hygiene