

# Emotional Warnings

NEW YORK (UPI)—Emotions may give clues to impending serious illness—but the signals generally are ignored by patients as well as many doctors.

Dr. Samuel Silverman, psychoanalyst and associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, made that point in an interview.

He believes that clusters of things cause sickness. His list of cause includes: Emotional, hereditary, political, cultural, ethnic, physical, socio-economic.

"All these things play a role in physical disease. I lean to this theory—the multifactorial basis for physical illness.

"I have noticed that very little has been said about emotional clues or warnings in connection with such signs being good predictors of illness. Clues from our emotions have been largely ignored by the health professions and the public."

No one clue will tell if you are going to come down with a heart attack, a bleeding ulcer or crippling arthritis.

But Dr. Silverman theorizes that the emotional clues should be used in an assessment of any physical clue.

"Sometimes, it has been my experience, these emotional clues give us earlier warnings than the most sophisticated diagnostic tests. They give us the first hint things aren't going right."

How do you feel when your emotions are giving off clues?

"You feel under a strain and the body doesn't feel right, you feel something's wrong inside," said Dr. Silverman. "You should see a doctor and tell him about it and have an examination that includes a discussion of emotional strain or stress you might be under."

Three kinds of stress can trigger such a feeling, which may be unconscious, a vague

feeling that something's wrong.

The first kind of stress: losses of any kind for which there is no substitute or replacement. This may be loss of person, job, reputation, money, a part of a body (breast amputation, for example), an irreplaceable pet, a hobby or a sport.

The second group of stresses: the anniversary complexes. You feel down and don't know why. It may be because this is the first anniversary of the day your last child got married and left the nest empty.

It may be because it's the anniversary of the death of a loved one. Or it may be the fifth year since you were passed up for a promotion you thought you deserved. Dr. Silverman says the down feeling stemming from anniversary complexes actually are the first signs of a physical crisis that's around the corner.

The third group of emotional stresses stems from success.

"It has been my experience," Dr. Silverman said, "that people who do not want advancement lest there be too many demands in the more prestigious position can become depressed or physically ill."

Or they may feel guilty about the promotion—since they got it upon someone's bad luck—illness or accident forcing him from job.

In some cases the emotional stress from success negatively affects close relatives—a wife or son or daughter.

In a new book, "How Will You Feel Tomorrow" (Stein and Day), Dr. Silverman ticks off case histories supporting his theories.

Twenty-five years' experience has convinced him the medical profession should pay closer attention to emotional causes in the cluster of causes of any physical disease.

"It wasn't chance," he

said, "that Richard Nixon's phlebitis flared up after his resignation"—to the point of a clot breaking off and lodging in a lung, a life-threatening situation Dr. Silverman believes was predictable.

Dr. Silverman said detective work on emotional clues can help predict a wide variety of illnesses, including such serious ones as blindness, hepatitis, heart attacks, cancer.

"If as many people learn to recognize the psychological clues as have become familiar with the physical indicators of body illness," he said, "we will be well on

## of Physical Diseases

the way to more effective prevention of untold personal suffering and economic loss."

Crying is a good release, according to Dr. Silverman. Even yelling may be good. But throwing things is a poor idea.

"Someone may be hurt or there will be other complications if you throw something," he said.

Just getting engaged in physical activities can help.

"Take a long hike, chop wood, give yourself an exercise break—or even talk things over with a confidante who is sympathetic. Acknowledge to yourself

that you are under a strain."

To be on the safe side, however, also have your body checked. Used in combination with physical tests, Dr. Silverman said "emotional indicators also may enable a person already sick (and his doctor) to predict whether he will respond to medication or surgery."

Is it really true, then, that illnesses partly are psychomatic?

"After interviewing hundreds of patients in over 25 years of clinical experience I have concluded that calling only certain illnesses psychomatic is misleading," Dr. Silverman said.

"I have found that emotional factors precede the onset and influence the course of all sickness, whether it be cancer, arthritis, pneumonia, tension, headache or whatever. My research has included a study of physically well people who subsequently became ill. It revealed that in addition to the highly publicized physical indicators, there are specific psychological clues which forecast the likelihood of illness.

"Some of these are not new but have been poorly understood. Others, hitherto, have been unknown."