

A bit of 'Antidepressant' reading - are you one of the growing number of Victims of Intelligence?

A story/essay for possible publication. There is also a poem/song lyric inviting anyone to set it to music as a sort of competition. A popular song would open many minds.

Do you take an antidepressant tablet everyday? If so - Do you wonder why you feel depressed or anxious or perhaps you have experienced anxiety attacks?

Ask yourself - apart from the inevitable winning the lottery do you have an ambition, a goal or a dream?

In this modern world where just about everything that can be done has been done, and everything we use has been perfected and developed with very little scope for any dramatic change, boredom becomes a depressing fact of life.

The UK population now stands at around 63 million and the number of prescriptions written for antidepressant drugs during the last year, including repeats, was approaching 50 million. The cost to the NHS in 2011 was £270million. Over the last twelve months there has been a 10% increase in prescriptions as more and more people go to see their doctors and explain just how they feel. I have to admit right now, before going any further, that I was one of those people but now have stopped taking anything. In an effort to depress you consider this. If one was to draw a graph for depression from the time man arrived on earth, it would be pretty flat perhaps rising only slightly until 1750 or thereabouts with the start of the industrial revolution. From then on, the time line would rise increasingly steeply as the opportunities for development and invention diminished, hence the current rise in the use of antidepressants. Put simply - man is running out of ideas and becoming bored.

It's a bit like getting thrills, experiencing the ultimate buzz and breaking records. The ultimate adrenalin rush now is to jump out of a balloon 28 miles above the Earth, or swoop down and through mountain passes skimming the rock face by the smallest amount wearing a wingsuit. There is also another, more physiological way some get their kick - perhaps an outrageous stunt or prank that will stun the world?. Will Usain Bolt's world record for the 100 metres sprint be beaten and if so by how many 10ths, or less, of a second?. How does one make a white knuckle ride even more thrilling? So for most of us, or very nearly all of us, life will probably be pretty mundane.

The usual causes and symptoms of depression often relate to things like frustration at work, grief, tiredness, lack of confidence and a feeling that one is simply not oneself. One very interesting symptom is having a constant need to create something or make something different in one's life to relieve boredom. This can seriously affect the sleep pattern and wellbeing of a person as the mind just races from one subject to the next in a constant quest for ideas and satisfaction. This is especially prevalent when an individual retires and suddenly has time to kill. To begin with the situation is fine, and if money isn't tight one can travel to places that have always been of interest. Do things around the house and garden or maybe, even relocate and start decorating and fitting out the new abode. Gradually though a need for something that satisfies grows and doing puzzles is often a short time fix giving a feeling of achievement and success when they are completed. In most cases there is always the family with perhaps grandchildren which gives one enormous pleasure but, deep within the soul is a restlessness and a drive to find something that stimulates and fills the space and gives a reward. This is where I come back to boredom. Coupled with this very real fact are two other contrubtary factors - one is that the bond between all members of a family has weakened. There was a time when if someone got depressed or down on their luck the family members would rally round and support and help lift the sufferer's spirit helping him to get through that bad,dark time. The other is the fading of Christian faith. Over the last decade or there has been a dramatic decline in church attendance as people find it difficult to have belief and a faith in this modern world of light and technology in which we now live. Once they could get some help from prayer but many are now left to flounder and are dependent on medication.

The ability of most people to interact and communicate is made very easy in this Hi-Tech world. We have e-mail and text, smart phones and the amazing information source of the internet available 24/7 if we need it. Home entertainment has never had so many TV channels, music storage and play facilities and radio stations, both FM and digital, are everywhere. This collective fact, for many of us, can create boredom. If one is reasonably intelligent the repetition and similarity between one TV programme and another, or one piece of music and another in, what seems to be, a duplicate playlist causes the person to simply switch off mainly out of frustration. For example our television networks are committed to show what is considered family entertainment and when the set is turned on invariably one will find a cooking programme, or maybe antiques being auctioned. It will very probably be to watch the same soap families arguing and fighting or a murder inquiry taking place. The cooking programme, in particular, is an interesting example as television production companies have noted that viewing figures are always pretty good. The reason for this fact is that millions of humans are desperately searching for a new taste and experience as they have simply become bored with food in general. The news, of course, does change but invariably it's about war, death, someone who has been vile ending up with a supposedly humorous short article to appease us. Reality shows and talent shows with people being humiliated. Endless house makeover or re-location programmes and, on some occasions, that odd programme - perhaps, or usually, a panel quiz game that, despite everything, actually can grab the attention and isn't boring. Yes - ask yourself just why are there so many quiz shows? The answer must be that they tend to stretch the mind a little and offer an escape from boredom. I would hazard a guess that audience rating figures are pretty steady for quiz shows and judging by how long Master Mind and A Question of Sport have been running they are popular.

There are the younger members of our society who try to escape reality or boredom and find something different by drinking alcohol to change their perspective of life. Sadly it often becomes binge drinking and the individual getting totally anaesthetised. Of course alcohol has been, and is being used by millions of us today and we read that the over 60's are drinking far more than they should. I can remember my father returning home from work in the city and immediately pouring a large glass of whiskey and lighting a cigarette, things he couldn't do at work. Doing this helped him unwind, switch off from the job and become part of the family.

I must confess that I too, like Liz Hodgkinson wrote recently, can hardly wait till 6pm to open the wine bottle or, dare I say it, the box. It seems to draw a line under the events of the day and a different kind of life starts. Analysing this evening intake of alcohol that so many of us do indicates that the reality of the working day time with the frustrations and in many cases boredom must also be tempered in some way.

I don't want to draw a line between intelligent, thinking humans and those that are quite content to let all the TV programmes, popular music and life in general fill their lives. Let me make it perfectly clear that by intelligent I don't simply mean people with academic qualifications. I mean those who are inventive, imaginative with inquisitive minds thinking how they can achieve the dreams to which they aspire. Look at it this way. The more aware and conscious a human is his point of view and perception are much sharper. Mankind stands alone and is the only creature with reasonable understanding as to what is happening and for that matter what he is. One extremely important fact that places humans in a totally different place to all other creatures is that at the age of between ten and twenty years old he becomes aware that his stay here is finite. He will die at some point in the future and that triggers all the emotions we know. For all other creatures life is lived in virtual oblivion and by instinct alone and therefore have no reason to be bored or depressed. So there is, in effect, a sliding scale between the least intelligent animal or creature rising up to the more domesticated animals like cats, horses and man's best friend the dog. Above all these comes the human but even here there are some that for no reason or fault of their own cannot, or do not, understand the full reality and those who have a constant ambition and desire to achieve everything they can imagine or dream about. The openings and opportunities left to all people whatever their age get fewer all the time as the existing manufacturers and service industries modify and improve each product range or service with the latest and perhaps smallest shift in technology. Therefore for the intelligent, imaginative and ambitious human frustration kicks in.

The question for many is how does one stop or reduce the frustration and feeling of hopelessness that prevails. Along with the thought of never being able to reach the goals and ambitions in the persons mind. Something is needed to change the individual's point of view and that can be alcohol or drugs. If a person can numb their mind and in fact for a time become 'non-intelligent' or 'thinking' it's obvious that their point of view will be changed and they can escape, for a while, and maybe enjoy themselves provided they don't overdo it. But this gets very precarious as the habit grows and the amount taken increases so the addict is born finding unnatural solace in self-stupification. This is no way forward and as we all know illegal drugs are a menace. For the user there is no control of the quality or purity and simply no way of knowing the strength. If this intelligent, imaginative person seeks to escape reality and boredom then a much safer way is by seeing a doctor and getting the correct antidepressant and counselling so they can come to terms with things by turning their brains down a little.

I believe the reason for the steady increase in the number of people turning to their GP's for help is due to more of us striving to find stimulation and becoming aware of just how mundane many aspects of life really are. As we have learned more about how everything around us works and how quickly information and news travels some of us struggle to find something that is new, unique and satisfying to stretch our minds.

Trying to create, invent or find something which is in a way entertaining and interesting for others is a wonderful gift to have it's also very satisfying to do but the opportunities get fewer by the week. At the same time the number who have that aspiration or want fame by winning something like The X Factor is on the increase and if one can't find some type of creative hobby or distraction boredom and frustration sets in. As these feelings build so hopelessness and eventually depression takes over. One literally becomes a 'victim of intelligence'. Everything is boring, can't be bothered to watch TV and just falls asleep - any new music sounds pretty much the same as the last release - all the adverts are for the same old things - many of the people one sees seem to becoming clones. The question keeps coming to mind that if it's like this now what on earth will it be like in twenty years time - what will be the subject of a 2033 advert - shampoo, toothpaste or can one imagine the subject discipline of the New Strictly _____ what? - frightening and depressing isn't it?

On the other hand and looking on the bright side if a person of any age has no inspiration or aspiration, no real ambition and just gets up and goes to work, does their job well and comes home and sits in front of the telly and embraces all those normal things that everyday life has to offer, in the main they will be pretty content. But for the others amongst us to stop thinking or dreaming, turning off imagination and the desire to succeed and accepting the very ordinary things that are available - is so difficult to do for anyone with ambition. So the 'Victim of Intelligence' is born and sadly will always become depressed.

Here below is perhaps a song lyric or poem...

Robin Mayhew 14th February 2013 (copyright) Total word count approx. 1470 including lyric below.

Victim of Intelligence

Intelligence is a crazy thing
Too much and you feel the sting
Things seem so boring and it's all the same
I wish it took less to satisfy my brain.

Switch on the TV and what do I see?
Same soap, cooking, reality or a murder enquiry
Makes one think - just what is wrong.
Have I been missing something all along.

Is it the others who cannot see
Just how boring the world can be.
Got your iPad and got your phone
You're fitting in you're not alone.
Repetitive sounds and the same old ads.
May not be counted but may be charged.
Think of the number on happy pills
They're the ones who were thinking still.

Binge drinking is a thing young do
To get away and find something new.
So fed with the same old sounds,
the news and things that make the world go round.

Trying to find something new
Something fresh or another view.
But the rest just sit stuck like glue
With no vision and without a clue.
If you're thinking - It seems you're cursed
Some can find so little to satisfy their thirst.
Expand your mind and try and create
Make something of your life
Before it's too late.

Being a victim with an active mind
You must take a rest and try to find
A way to embrace those simple things
That the others find so interesting.
Be like them for twelve hours a day
It may turn out to be the only way.

Robin Mayhew 14th February 2013 (copyright) Total word count including lyric approx. 1470