

Primitive pleasure as the basic human state

Physiological homeostasis as a goal for much of nursing practice is put into question. The goal of primitive pleasure is substituted as a goal of nursing in that nurses assist people in returning to a basic state of pleasure. This basic human state is further specified as primitive pleasure, primitive in that it is sensory, sensual, and carnal as compared to cognitive or esthetic in nature. Propositions related to primitive pleasure as the basic human state are identified, described, illustrated, and discussed. This beginning conceptualization of an ideal human state was developed without examination of or relation to existing theories such as arousal, stimulation response, Freud's pleasure principle, or developmental theories.

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PRODUCING AND maintaining a state of primitive pleasure is one goal of nursing, yet nurses have no typology of pleasure to use in evaluating nursing effectiveness related to pleasure. The notion of primitive pleasure as a concept fundamental to health is based on nursing theory. The underlying principle is that primitive pleasure is basic to healthy human existence and thus can be defined as the basic human state. Accepting this idea requires acknowledging that pleasure is a universal, positive experience and that primitive, that is, bodily, sensual pleasure is a component of health.

This proposition is a departure from a theory of "basic physiological protective mechanisms,"^{1(p385)} which stated that the basic human state was assumed to be physiological homeostasis, variously referred to as dynamic stability or physiological stability. When this homeostasis is threatened by some external stimulus, messages are sent from receptor sites to reflex centers in the brain (the hypothalamus for

the most part). External stimuli include noxious food or drink, heat, cold, lack of air, hyperactivity, noxious agents touching the skin, lack of food or fluid, and vile odors.

These stimuli produce sensations that, in turn, lead to observable behaviors. The body's physiological responses first trigger a number of basic reflexes. These reflexes are warning signals that may be experienced as nausea, vomiting, chilling, sweating, dyspnea, fatigue, thirst, hunger, diarrhea, or itching. Warning signals are protective. They provide personal awareness of an external threat to homeostasis before pathology occurs, and they demand immediate attention and action. Most people cannot ignore sensations of being nauseated, feeling icy cold, having a growling colon, or being itchy.

Once a person responds to these physiological warning signals and takes action, the signals usually disappear. After these sensations are gone, feelings of ease, pleasure, sensual delight, enjoyment of bodily sensations, gratification, or voluptuousness often follow. Who has not nestled, luxuriating in a chair before a fire after being numbed with the cold? Who has not danced gleefully in an air-conditioned room after feeling the freedom from cloying heat? Who has not felt relieved by the stomach that has "settled" after vomiting? Who has not wriggled and scratched in sensual ecstasy the itch remaining after removing woolen undergarments? Who does not remember being thirsty and experiencing the first swallow of soda or beer, bubbling cool and wet in the mouth?

These pleasurable sensations are empirical data.¹ Theory must explain empirical data, and data must illustrate theory,

if the theory is to be a viable model of the particular universe under consideration. These data seem to indicate that the goal of the body's response to the discomfort and pain caused by external stimuli is pleasure—that is, *bodily pleasure*—and not physiological homeostasis. The problem was that restoration of the basic state in response to stimuli was always related to some sensual pleasure or pleasures. The basic premise—that of physiological homeostasis as the basic human state—could not account for pleasure as an outcome of protective behavior (Fig 1). Pleasurable, sensual responses cannot be explained as resolution of warning phenomena, because the antecedents are then not related to what follows. Therefore, the basic premise

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Physiological homeostasis is a goal of physiological health defined by physiologists as a biological model of the human organism. Physiological homeostasis is, however, a neutral term, not a holistic definition of health. It is limited by laboratory values because laboratory test results are expressed quantitatively, so that upper and lower limit lines of physiological homeostasis are fixed and rigid. Inner messages about loss and alteration of primitive feelings of pleasure are invalidated by this kind of rigidity. Health professionals who depend on fixed standards may also distrust inner body experience or feelings for

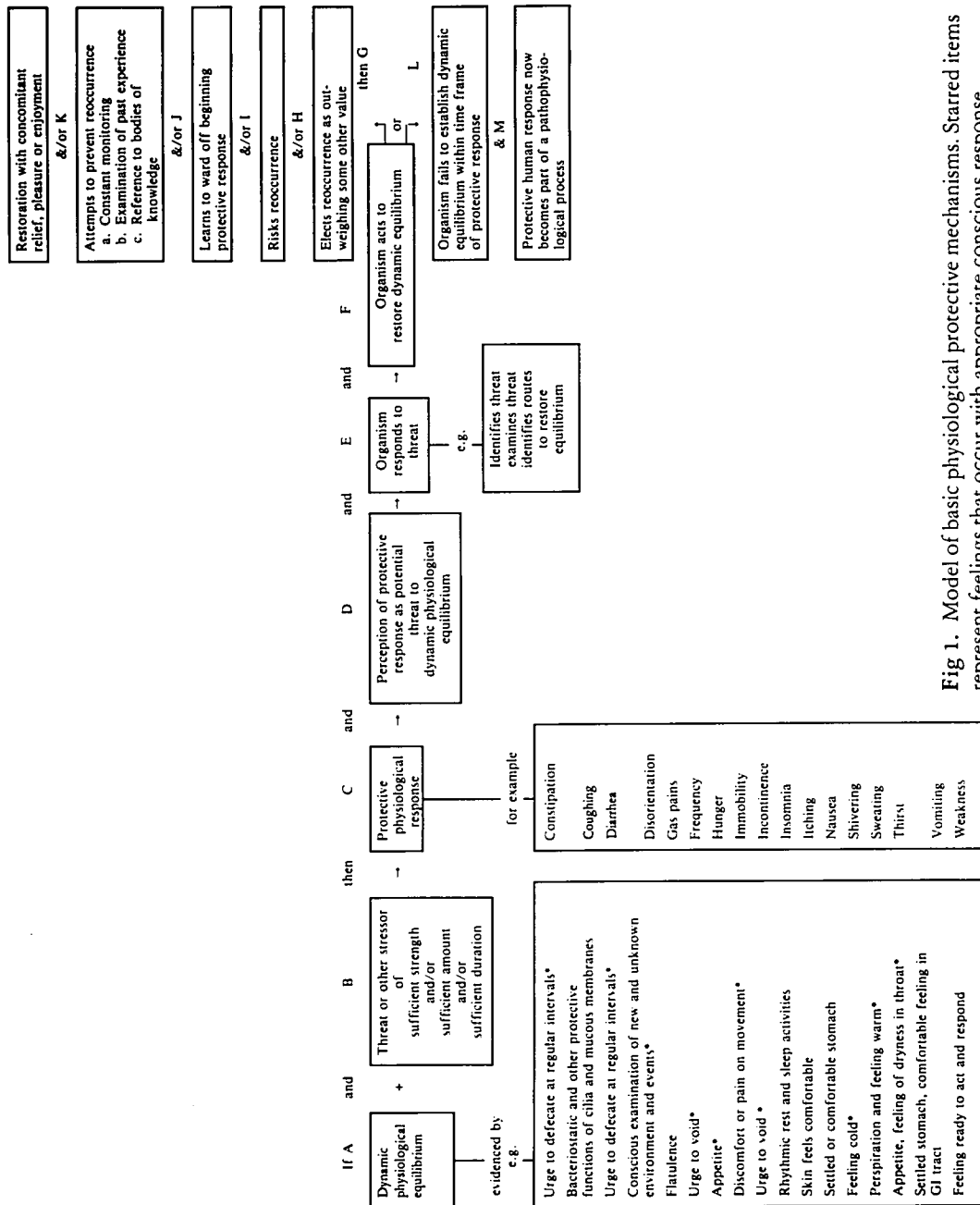


Fig 1. Model of basic physiological protective mechanisms. Starred items represent feelings that occur with appropriate conscious response.

which there are no laboratory "truths" or mathematical norms. Professionals may then cast doubt on the validity, if not sanity, of people who listen to the experience of their bodies and who attend to the body's inner messages. The concept of physiological homeostasis thus does not encompass the possibility of positive health, future orientation, personal growth, or even healing.

If physiological homeostasis is not a holistic term for describing human existence, some critical questions become: Within a holistic framework, is there a basic or natural state for human beings? Is the basic human state neutral or homeostatic, or might it instead be positive? How can a holistic view of the basic human state be conceptualized? Information provided by nurses indicates that one stated goal of nursing is to promote some form of pleasure for patients. The objective might be to make the patient feel good or to provide physical comfort. Nursing activities are designed to promote health, not necessarily to cure illness. When nursing objectives are carried out as delegated medical functions (ie, directed toward curing illness), they are more apt to be directed toward physiological homeostasis.

DEFINING PRIMITIVE PLEASURE

Primitive pleasure is bodily pleasure mediated at the reflex level rather than esthetic pleasure mediated by the intellect. It involves consciousness and awareness but little if any cognitive activity to modify responses. The primitive pleasure experience is sensual, sensuous, carnal, fleshly, passionate, and physical. It may be experi-

enced generally or in one or more organs but is experienced through the senses as ease, comfort, gladness, bodily lightness, or sensations produced by tickling. It involves feelings of tranquility, languor, melting inside, or bubbling inside. It involves feeling good, aroused, excited, ready, blissful, content, satisfied, calm, restored, peaceful, cheerful, restful, fulfilled, and delighted—maybe even awed. It involves feeling positive bodily sensations, sometimes wallowing in them. Primitive pleasure is thus the perception of satisfaction associated with natural events. Achieving pleasure is an integrated process, not a function of individual biological systems.

Longstanding anxiety, negative attitudes, and distrust of pleasurable, sensual, carnal experiences may limit the definition of primitive pleasure or may even create resistance to primitive pleasure as a major nursing goal. Twentieth-century psychology has defined pleasure as a genital phenomenon, and theorists have a long history of intellectualizing sensory experience. Self-indulgence is often deemed too voluptuous, thus putting negative value on primitive human experience. Nurses, however, need a new perspective and might therefore consider some new propositions related to primitive pleasure.

Primitive pleasure as an aspect of human development

Primitive pleasure can be viewed developmentally. The human fetus lives in a buoyant, warm, secure sac, living comfortably in an ideal world while preparing for the stress of delivery. This assumption of security is axiomatic for many studies of

the emotional aspects of intrauterine life. Professionals and the society as a whole also foster the maintenance of a pleasurable intrauterine existence and behave in ways suggesting that maternal experience is an important factor in providing a pleasurable state for the fetus. For example, sucking in utero is viewed by some as comforting when abrupt movement or traffic noise alter the peaceful environment.² Reports note that the fetal heart rate accelerates in response to acoustic stimulation.³ In addition, fluids containing caffeine or high levels of glucose "awaken" the fetus.⁴ From the moment of birth efforts are directed toward reproducing the pleasant intrauterine world by providing a warm and soft environment with the addition of pleasurable sucking, rocking, and rhythmic verbalization. These pleasure-producing additions are the foundation for lifelong pleasure patterns of activity and rest, touching and snuggling, talking and pausing, as well as gustatory and ingestive pleasures.

Parental activity in enhancing pleasure has been influenced by developmental psychologists. Professionals now urge parents to stimulate the sensory apparatus to provide pleasurable experience for infants. The color red has been identified as one to which infants respond positively. Movement (vicarious and active) is assumed to provide pleasure, and nurseries have mobiles, tropical fish ponds, or strings of large beads, often colored red, that twist and turn.

Not only do these additions foster pleasure but it is common knowledge that such sensory stimulation also promotes growth and intellectual development.

Infant feeding is or can be a highly

sensual experience for both mother and child, and adults cater to the pleasure of sucking in many ways. Bathing is highly pleasurable through sensual modes of touching—patting, tickling, pinching, or wiggling. Parents play "This little pig went to market" much earlier than infants can understand the game, but infants respond gleefully to the touch and rhythm. Infants' joy in finding parts of their own bodies through apparently aimless activity is well recognized. Early reflex action involves little hands finding the mouth and being pleased while sucking a finger or the whole hand. The infant discovers turning and rocking as a source of pleasure. Infancy is not over before manipulating the genitalia produces pleasurable sensations.

In childhood physical pleasure is heightened by the addition of variables for sensual experience in every aspect of living. To milk and pap, as food, are added the tastes of sweets, sour, and salts. Textures are changed from soft and smooth to chewy, bubbly, and crispy. With all the additions, parents may be embarrassed when, on a special occasion in a restaurant, they eat steak while their young children choose mashed potatoes with gravy and hamburgers. Children add new pleasurable experiences rapidly but are not ready for adult tastes and textures.

Growth and readiness for new experiences bring children to adulthood as they find pleasure in spices, wines, and other condiments in their food, plus the addition of exotic cheeses, olives, caviar, artichokes, and snails, as well as steak, to name a few tempters of the palate. The sodas, coffees, and teas available number in the thousands. At this level, one may not be able to entirely separate the sensual from the

esthetic or bodily enjoyment from prestige and status in eating.

Activity is another source of pleasure for children. Childhood games, often called the work of children, enhance pleasure through rhythms, touch, and bodily exploration or awareness. Activity-rest rhythms seen in games such as hide-and-seek may also be seen in taking turns. Finer and finer rhythms are introduced in music and singing games, for example, "The Farmer in the Dell." Touching goes beyond "Patty Cake, Patty Cake, Baker's Man" to "Ring Around the Rosy" and tag. Touching permits awareness of textures—of a soft teddy bear or of modeling clay. Bodily awareness comes through jungle gyms. Games such as "Here We Go Looby Loo," wherein children identify and then shake or otherwise manipulate body parts, provides pleasure that emanates from internal and external body surfaces. Throughout life, games, recreational activity, and much of one's life work require constant refinement of body rhythms. Some activities, such as dancing, have touch built into them. Others, such as fencing or playing baseball, combine intellectual prowess or competitive skill along with animal bodily pleasure.

Pleasure and emerging sexuality

Sleep develops a diurnal pattern from which children arise rested, optimistic, and ready for the day. Pleasure in bed is enhanced by security blankets, cuddly toys, and a myriad of other childhood delights. Masturbation becomes a childhood activity, although this may also become the first instance in which pleasure as a basic human need is denied. The current generation of parents seems to be more comfortable with masturbatory activ-

ity, although the recognition that it is normal is not universally shared.

Bodily pleasure through sexual activity, usually accepted for one sex, is now accepted for both. Sexual pleasure is now seen as necessary to the maintenance of basic bodily pleasure. A satisfactory sex life creates feelings that permeate one's days and positively influence one's behavior. Whereas emotional components or intellectual commitment to a loving relationship cannot be excluded, bodily pleasure in a myriad of touch activities and sensual ecstasy needs to be viewed as a part of the basic human state of pleasure.

PLEASURE AND ITS SOURCE

Sensual pleasure has its source in innocence—in a new body exploring an unknown world. This innocence may seem self-explanatory but suggests the potential for almost infinite variety in achieving the basic human state. It also suggests discovery, for innocent movement in any direction creates new experience. Innocence suggests choice among the myriad possibilities of experience, and it suggests freedom to be without knowledge of pain, anger, manipulative behavior, or evil. Innocence suggests the possibility of creating the ideal life, however rarely that might occur. Innocence—at least in its beginning—feels good and is good, and while it is new, it contains and holds the promise of

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an ideal—the maintenance of a continuously pleasurable human state.

Pleasure and water

All organs in touch with the environment function as receptor sites for pleasurable input at the level of nervous system reflex centers. For example, water functions to produce pleasure. There is a great deal of literature dealing with sensual pleasure and feelings of bodily safety or security provided by the warm amniotic fluid in which a fetus floats. Whether this carries over to postuterine existence or whether it is experienced as a new pleasure, water fascinates human beings and provides a variety of sensual pleasures. Anyone who has worked with young children knows how difficult it is to keep them away from running water (including bathroom faucets). They splash, wade, spill, pour, kick, and wriggle in water, whether warm or cold.

The drive for primitive pleasure is not as obvious in adults except as one reads statistics on the sales of water-related products and the number of vacations at lakes, rivers, and seashores. Saunas, whirlpools, Scotch douches, showers, baths, and the like are adult variations of products and activities for enhancing primitive pleasure. Water also produces sensual pleasure when it falls and sprays as in a water fountain that one sees and hears.

Water is buoyant. It titillates through temperature—warm, hot, or cold; it titillates through movement—pouring, sprinkling, or swirling over body surfaces. It makes the body more fluid in movement than any other medium. It is a chameleon of the world's moods, sun, clouds, and storms, so it has many shades of blue,

green, slates, and gray with or without waves topped by a frosting of surf.

Receptors for associating water with pleasure include olfactory, taste, touch, temperature, and visual sites. Water is related to smell. One can smell the salt in the ocean and the clam flats at the seashore. In many places, as in the desert, rain has a special smell. Water is a solvent for flowery, fruity, and spicy odors incorporated into perfumes and food. Water has taste. Travelers notice many differences among waters they drink from city to city. The comfort of ingesting warm liquids in ill health is common knowledge. Chicken soup, for example, is associated with mothering. Amniotic fluid has been resymbolized so that subliminally it becomes soup.

Pleasure and body image

The sensory model of the primitive pleasure state defines the development of body image (ie, the somatic ego) as the body interacts with the environment. Successful physical self-definition depends upon and emerges out of many pleasurable body-environment interactions. How big or how little one feels depends on how one fits doors, beds, chairs, and clothes. Physical self-definition depends on how one takes up space and how one is bounded by other structures that occupy space.

How powerful one feels has to do with whether one's experience with the environment is one of control or whether it is overwhelming. How vulnerable one feels has to do with the degree of threat or harm from the environment (eg, the ground is hard when one falls, the sand burns on a hot day, thunder on a summer afternoon shakes the windows). How vulnerable one

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feels is also related to perception of size. Bodily self-control emerges from control of the environment. Children, for instance, learn that going too far out into the lake causes them to sink; they learn that putting hands on a hot stove causes burns. To some extent children learn to accept their appearance from the physical environment. They love to look in mirrors. Games children play teach them to relate to the environment, for example, by making mud pies, sand castles, snowmen, and snowballs. They dance, throw, swim, hop, jump—these activities provide the feeling of “my” body on this earth. What the body is like and what it will do depends to a large extent on pleasurable interaction with the environment. When the body is inferior and has many things it cannot do, painful and uncomfortable environmental relationships develop.

The somatic sexual image starts early through imitation of the same sex parent in gesture, voice tone, and walk. Who has not seen the father’s swagger in the toddler? Although this primitive state may seem simple compared to esthetically and intellectually derived pleasure, primitive pleasure is nonetheless extremely complex because of both environmental and bodily complexity in rhythm, patterning, and spatial relationships.

PLEASURE AS A RANGE OF EXPERIENCE

Primitive pleasure includes several levels of intensity. Among low level or low frequency sensual pleasures are feelings of ease, comfort, goodness, security, settlement, contentment, or peace. High frequency sensual pleasures produce nervous

excitement such as joy, delight, and ecstasy.

Between these two extremes, sensual pleasure may be experienced as gratification, voluptuousness, gladness, body lightness or bubblieness, and enjoyment. More precise definition will permit better categorization and possibly a hierarchy of sensual experience to describe primitive pleasure as the basic state.

Pleasure as patterned sequence

Sensory pleasure is patterned according to time, intensity, variation, innovation, and developmental readiness. Circadian rhythm is one source of patterning primitive pleasure as in a delicious letting go when resting or enjoying the feeling of tiredness after a successful day. Living in general is patterned by alternating patterns of rest and activity, as people could not tolerate intense physical pleasure all the time.

Whatever its intensity, pleasure promotes continuity or repetition that results in some degree of habituation. Variations in the causes of pleasure and experiences of pleasure are important to maintaining a basically pleasurable and dynamic state. The search for new sources of pleasure and new ramifications of old pleasure provides opportunities for learning, which in turn foster development and readiness for new pleasures.

Pleasure as variation

New pleasurable stimuli continually emerge to maintain the basic human pleasurable state. Development of the nervous system provides opportunities of such variation and complexity that no person can begin to realize more than a fraction of the

potential for pleasurable experience. Seeking new primitive pleasurable experiences is thus a natural part of growth. Johnson makes this explicit as one proposition of her conceptual framework for nursing when she states, "Man also actively seeks new experience" (D. E. Johnson, unpublished paper, 1968). The closer a person is to developmental maturity, the greater the variety of environmental stimuli available to maintain pleasure as the basic human state. Human enterprise is constant, and continual exploration of the environment provides new resources for pleasurable, sensual stimulation. Infants explore the environment through their mouths. Adults might turn to saunas, whirlpools, vibrators, electric blankets, perfume, foods, and far-out things like tattoos.

More common among adult pleasures are the many possibilities for reduction of cortical vigilance at bedtime. To promote the pleasures of sleepiness and sleep, the kinds of beds available are almost limitless. Beds may be large or small; rectangular or round; soft or hard; with legs or without legs; filled with water, horse hair, kapok, straw, or down; hot, warm, or cold; and vibrating or still. People also carry out presleep routines that involve sensory experiences. These might include water, perfume, or creams, which please through touch, texture, odor, color, or sensory stimulation of dermal structures. Clothing for sleep may be voluminous or brief; long or short; gown, shirt, briefs, or pants; satin, silk, cotton, flannel, rayon, synthetic fiber, or wool; lacy or plain; white, black, colored, or printed; and fitted or loose. If none of these combinations maintains a pleasurable basic state, sleeping in the nude may be effective.

On the other hand, the constant evolution of new sources of primitive pleasure may be less a developmental process than a need for continued maintenance of a primitive pleasurable state without which the organism is in some unhealthy or emotionally catabolic state of boredom, alienation, or anomie.

Pleasure and fire

Fire, for example, can be a source of pleasure. Appreciating fire requires both the ability to cope and the need to integrate new pleasure. Whether it is a fire at a campsite in the forest, a mountain meadow, or a fireplace in one's living room, fire is hypnotic. The fascination with flickering, flaming shades of red enhanced by one or all of the colors of the spectrum is universal; the constant flaming without a repeated pattern is mesmerizing. Fire involves the whole sensual range of existence. It causes rapt attention; in addition, darkness is lighted, and the air wafts aromas of pine, piñon, or other smoke as the wind and weather dictate.

The total absorption that fire creates functions as an almost purely physical out-of-self experience, as the body may interact slavishly with this environmental phenomenon. Cognitive activity may also occur. By Kekule's own account, after years of work, the benzene ring danced out of the flames of a fire in his fireplace while he was dozing.⁵ This, of course, is another dimension of pleasure.

Habitual pleasure as diminished sensitivity

Continual pleasurable stimulation by the same stimulus is related to habituation and

decreasing sensitivity to the pleasure. Therefore, when taken for granted, the stimulus is less a source of pleasure than when new. A position could be made for a proposition that people need continual pleasurable stimulation that increases in quantity, intensity, rhythm, frequency, and variation in form to maintain the basic human state.

For example, if it snowed all the time, would making snowmen and having snowball fights be fun? Would skiing be pleasure or work? If the same flowers in the garden bloomed all year round, would the joy in color, size and aroma be of the same intensity at the end of the year as at the beginning? Maintaining primitive pleasure thus reflects rhythmicity. It is not that deprivation is necessary for primitive pleasure or that people do not really appreciate something until it is gone. The awareness of the interaction between the rhythm of self and the environment is basic here.

Pain might alter the primitive pleasurable state and might well enhance the experience of pleasure, but pain is not essential to experience pleasure. Pleasure-pain adherents who postulate that pleasure is only known through pain misinterpret the proposition stated in this article.

FACTORS AFFECTING PLEASURE

Absence of pleasurable stimuli

Absence of a pleasurable stimulus for a period of time permits heightened pleasure with reintroduction of the stimulus. For example, patients in nursing homes often do not go out of doors or even see out of poorly placed windows. The author has observed that if red and gold autumn

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leaves are given to some of these patients, patients carry the leaves, stare at them, rub them against their cheeks, and try to smell them. The same phenomenon occurs with pansies or lilac blossoms, creating poignant images of people clutching lilacs and inhaling their aroma with looks of ecstasy on their faces.

The more time between experiences with a pleasurable stimulus, the greater the pleasure at its reintroduction. For example, patients in state hospitals for the mentally ill once did not go outside for long periods. One patient who had not been outside for 15 years came back from an excursion on the grounds with light in her eyes, and in a profound voice she said, "Today, I walked on grass." Likewise, if one has not seen a lady's slipper or a bluebird for 20 years the intensity of the sensual experience is greater than if seen only yesterday.

The capacity for pleasure causes most people to accept or to take for granted the pleasure of grass; its removal and reintroduction clarify the lovely color, the soft texture, the springiness underfoot, the anticipation of the next step where the foot sinks into and is enclosed by a soft "hand." It is easy to forget the smell of grass in the hot sun, after a rain, or just after cutting, but the experience is there for many people to enjoy easily and naturally. Each year, children roll in new fallen leaves in autumn, cavort in the first snow, pick the first dandelion flower, or roll in sand warmed by the new summer sun.

The time between these experiences does not mean deprivation or even a conscious need to reexperience a particular stimulus. Everyone has had a happy or pleasurable renewal of some earlier experience without having felt deprived. People say, "I forgot how blue the Caribbean is," or "how nice warm sand feels," or "how delicious mashed potatoes are."

Pleasure and increasing sensitivity

The human organism develops structures that are increasingly sensitive to pleasurable stimuli. The skin is a wonderful example of sensitivity. Skin can feel the slightest breeze, the touch of a butterfly's wing, the sheen of satin, the stroke of a feather on a cheek, the fall of a snowflake, the velvet glow of the sun's rays, the warmth of a bathtub of water, the pin-pricks of a cold shower, the softness of a towel, and the smallest wrinkle in a sheet.

Pleasure and aging

The kind of stimuli that maintain pleasure as the basic human state are to some degree a function of the physiological development that comes with age. The sensory experiences that contribute to a pleasurable state in infants, children, adolescents, young adults, mature adults, and the aged are different. The differences in the experiences of warmth at all these developmental stages illustrate the variability of pleasure as a function of age.

PRECONSCIOUS QUALITIES

Bodily knowledge and pleasure involve preconscious, inherent, wordless qualities of intuition, mystical experience, impressions of intent, understanding of beauty,

instinctual knowledge, feelings, or sensual impressions about power (self and others) and spontaneity.

Spontaneous, intuitive experiences are those in which the participants follow where the experiences lead. "I felt the need to touch him"; "I don't know why I just took her in my arms and held her"; "I found myself sharing part of this stranger's orange"; "I don't know how, but I caught her pleasure"; "I knew in my heart that was the way to go"; "somehow I knew I was big enough and strong enough, the feeling came from nowhere"; "I actually jumped up and down for joy"; "I dropped to the beach and rolled in the warm sand with the kids"; "my instinct made me say, 'no.' "

Spontaneity

Spontaneous acts in relation to preconscious bodily knowledge cause expansion and enrichment of bodily pleasure. Such acts might include jumping into a rushing stream fully clothed on a hot summer's day or skinny dipping in a mountain pool just because it is there. They might include taking a bite out of a snowball or recognizing the pleasure in emptying the bladder or passing flatus.

In a complex, suspicious society people are not as free to exploit the wonderful world at the edge of consciousness or the sensitive information-centered world of the inner surfaces of the body. How often do most people allow themselves to enjoy the musky odor of a stranger of the opposite sex? How many people really savor the experience of passing a bakery during baking hours? How often is one aware of the many sounds of the wind? How often do most people spontaneously share sensual events with another? To what extent

do most people study pleasurable intuitions, pleasurable impressions, pleasurable "vibes," and spontaneous pleasurable acts as part of life's enrichment?

Reality

Reality cannot be fully perceived without preconscious or innate sensory experience of self and world. Without sensory perception, there is a loss of part of the ability to perceive. Repression of these qualities leaves only intellectual knowledge of the body and its pleasures.

SOCIETY'S VIEWS OF PLEASURE

Philosophical and religious views

Negative perceptions about pleasure as the basic human state may be related to stifling primitive pleasurable experiences for a state that is more neutral, stoic, aggressive, or competitive. Even so, history suggests a tradition that recognizes the value of pleasure. For example, the ancient Greeks did not polarize the soma and psyche but instead conceived a highly dependent, complementary relationship in which the condition of the psyche (mind and soul) was determined by the health of the body.

Aristotle was possibly the first to conceptualize a hierarchy of needs in which "the care of the body ought to precede that of the soul."⁶ In this reciprocal relationship he saw a continual search for bodily pleasure as necessary for coping with pain.

Modern society must now explain why the pleasures of the body appear to be more desirable. The first reason is that pleasure drives out pain. When people experience an excess of pain, they pursue excessive excel-

lence and bodily pleasure, generally in the belief that it will remedy pain. These remedial measures (i.e. the pleasures) become very intense—and that is the reason that they are pursued—because they are experienced in contrast with their opposite.⁷

Aristotle also stated, "Therefore, the highest good is some sort of pleasure, despite the fact that most pleasures are bad."⁷ Although Aristotle dealt with bodily pleasure as a moral issue rather than as the natural human state, the Greeks' contribution was in seeing the unity of psyche and soma and in defining the interdependence necessary for a state of health. They also identified bodily health as basic to psychic health and defined pleasure and its search as good.

Judeo-Christian theology was from the beginning dualistic in its conceptualization of humans as mind and body, and mind and body have therefore been in conflict since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Embarrassment about nudity was the first punishment to these first world inhabitants. This was a major attack on bodily pleasure, because it defined the appearance of the body as bad. In this tradition, the goal of life becomes saving the soul, and the body and its pleasures must, to a greater or lesser extent, be sacrificed to the soul. This concept of human life was woven early into both church and civil law, so that to some extent, bodily pleasure is still synonymous

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with promiscuity and licentiousness. The assumption is that deprivation of pleasure and painful punishment build strong moral character, which is good for the soul.

The Book of Mormon (Nephi II, 3:22–26) defines the pleasure–punishment dichotomy this way:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created would have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have no children, wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy for they knew no misery, doing no good for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be and men are that they may have joy.⁸

The message, at least in part, is that Adam fell so that people might exist and experience joy. God punished but also rewarded Adam and Eve in the Fall. Although pain is implied, if not promised, joy is explicit and demanded.

Two philosophical traditions, those of Apollo and Dionysius, also shed some light on ideas and values about the body. Apollonian philosophy is a tradition of logical action based on conscious thought. It emphasizes a passion for reason, order, and discipline. Dionysian philosophy is in the tradition of sensually pleasing the body and refreshing the spirit. Exploration of spirituality, bodily pleasures, sexuality, and beauty, whether in moderation or in excess, is the mode. Pleasure affirms what one knows and thinks. People's passions have a place in living. The source of unity between and among people, human spiri-

tual freedom, and the nature of goodness lie in daring to have Dionysian experience.

Modern views of pleasure

Pleasure accompanied by or leading to pain may be recreated as pleasure or as future pain, for example, painful nostalgia. If modern society is in fact driven to pleasure, searching for pleasure, and preoccupied with achieving pleasure, this drive may be caused by a developmental failure to achieve the basic state of primitive pleasure. Failure to integrate sensual pleasure into individual growth and development may be a cause of the drive for pleasure (eg, the purchase of many instruments of pleasure, substance abuse, speeding, or window shopping in large shopping malls as recreation).

Deprivation of physical sensory pleasure is a major ingredient in the expression of physical violence.^{9,10} The literature describes violence as an outcome when infants and children are deprived of sensory pleasure, particularly pleasure from touch. "The secret spring of violence may be in the infant brain. If its pleasure pathways are not stimulated by rocking and caressing, it may flood the child with violent impulses" (*Saturday Review*, 1979, 215(4), p 17). Pleasure-prone people seem to lack this sense of violence.⁹ Prescott observes: "Among human beings, a pleasure-prone personality rarely displays violence or aggressive behaviors, and a violent personality has little ability to tolerate experience, or to enjoy sensually pleasing activities."^{9(p11)}

If primitive pleasure is the basic human state, what has happened to it? Why did negating philosophies, religious theory, or

cultural aims become the norm? How did people get so far off the track? One could speculate that sensual pleasures became so hedonistic that life-supporting activities, such as provision of food, were neglected. Did evolving civilization change its value system from sensual pleasure to intellectual pursuit? Did great kings or generals invent the work ethic, which eschews pleasure to help others amass wealth, attain power, or win wars? Must pleasure be viewed as time lost from work, money, land, or power? Did the intelligentsia exploit the less intelligent so that only the exploiters could live in the basic pleasurable state?

Did religious leaders, in their fervor to remake the world, demand subjugation of the body to absolute control for the sake of fostering the spirit? Were they afraid of the power of pleasure in competing with religious dogma? Guilt for bodily sensual pleasure then had to be enhanced by stoicism, deprivation, penance, and flagellation. The notion that life is a trial with suffering on earth and delay of pleasure until the hereafter is still operational. Is there cultural guilt about enjoying bodily processes—and the lower the bodily process, the greater the guilt? Was denial of the body part of population control efforts—reduction at certain times, production at others? If primitive pleasure is the basic human state, did it get a low rating in the hierarchy of cultural values in competition with intellectual activity, work, religion, and wealth?

DISCUSSION

Relation to physiological homeostasis

One question for consideration is whether primitive pleasure as the basic

human state is not part of the concept of physiological homeostasis or whether physiological homeostasis is not an aspect of pleasure. A specific nursing observation documents this second possibility. Joan was in bed at home in the terminal phase of cancer. For five years she had been subjected to devastating catabolic processes and was almost as far from physiological homeostasis as anyone could be. One morning the family member who gave her morning care called to say that she was "very bad." The family member left for work, leaving Joan with a sitter because the hospice nurse was due in an hour and a half. When the hospice nurse arrived at 11 AM she called to say she could not leave Joan with the sitter—that she would stay—for it appeared that Joan would not last the day. At 3:30 PM she called again to say that Joan was having a cocktail party with some friends and neighbors in the backyard. When friends came to visit, Joan came out of her confused state to rise to the occasion, and said that she felt good. It was a warm spring day; the lawn was green with the first growth of grass, and the sky was azure blue. The hospice nurse and friends lifted all 60 lbs of Joan on her sheepskin sheet and laid her on the soft grass in the sunshine. Joan said she'd like a Bloody Mary and a neighbor procured tomato juice and vodka. A half dozen people then toasted the joy of a spring day. All this took a half-hour. Joan became tired and confused and was carried back to her bed. Despite Joan's devastating condition, the primitive pleasures of feeling warmth from the sun, seeing light and beauty in nature, touching new grass, smelling spring, tasting the sharpness of tomato juice, and feeling that inner circulating body fluids

were in place were still goals for her in living—no matter how fragile or brittle that living was. Joan died two weeks later.

Nature of basic state

The question about the nature of a basic state and how static it must be remains. Is it basic if, to maintain it, one must constantly seek it, nurture it, and enhance it? Diet, activity, elimination, interpersonal adequacy, safety, and the like need constant attention to remain part of a pleasurable state. Yet in listening to the messages emanating from bodily surfaces one constantly responds in ways that maintain or enhance a pleasurable state. This usually happens naturally, if not almost automatically. One would not even ask the same questions about physiological homeostasis. Maintenance of physiological homeostasis requires constant attention that is eventually built into living and, like the seeking of pleasures, varies with developmental age.

People are always in search of new experiences (D. E. Johnson, unpublished paper, 1968), especially pleasurable stimuli, which suggests another question: If primitive pleasure is the basic state, why do people habituate to pleasurable sensual experiences so readily?

Process for experiencing primitive pleasure

Is there a process for experiencing primitive pleasure—as permitting oneself to “go with it,” succumb to it, and enjoy it as it occurs? Is there a process of wallowing in comfort, warmth, water, or a cozy nest? Does one become infused with pleasure? Is this determined by prior experience, mood,

If living is structured into 90-minute cycles of activity and rest, is pleasure more a component of the resting phase or is it characteristic of all phases?

readiness (or all three), or is it interactive, as in sexual intercourse? Perhaps it is both intra- and interpersonal? Does one become suffused with feelings of pleasure, comfort, satiation, accomplishment, or a sense of “this is right” and “this feels good”? If living is structured into 90-minute cycles of activity and rest, is pleasure more a component of the resting phase (ie, the restoration phase of physiological and intellectual activity), or is it characteristic of all phases (ie, a truly basic state)? What stressors interfere most with the process of experiencing the primitive pleasurable state?

Problems in elaborating on experience

The fullness, depth, mystery and self-involvement in experiencing primitive pleasure may make it impossible to describe the state while one is experiencing it. Although getting in touch with self is essential, some distance is needed to have the freedom to describe and appreciate fully the worth of the experience and its contribution to health. This very distance that forces the active self into abeyance may also deny the reality and practical worth of primitive pleasure in symbiotic relation with the environment. Contemplation about it may even be a source of guilt about sensual pleasure.

Furthermore, the result of cognitive consideration of one's primitive pleasure may

have little to do with the degree of pleasure experienced and more to do with cognitive connections between experience and the self. An inability to deal positively with primitive pleasure may also be a function of the degree of one's alienation from self, that is, separation from one's own humanness. When ideas and discoveries are valued over feelings, any inability to define pleasure may relate to a society in which control and discipline are very different when dealing with feelings than when dealing with experiences of the mind.

Possible additional elements of primitive pleasure

Are wonder, astonishment, or awe primitive pleasures? Is ecstasy, a kind of abandonment of mind and meaning, an analogous feeling? Even if these are cognitively initiated, sensations soon take over. Being overwhelming, these experiences drive out one's senses or drive out one's perspective through surprise or sensory overload.

If they are primitive pleasures, what function might they have in health promotion, growth, or healing? They involve total abandonment of care and trouble and thus may be considered orgasmic (along with vomiting, rage, grief, joy, and sexual orgasm), since they may also meet the criterion of total momentary relief of tension. These are sensations that may also function as the illuminating moment when one experiences the self through feeling. They may lead to discovery of the unity and wholeness of self.

Benefits of pleasure

Health promotion

If primitive pleasure is the basic human state, it must have a function for people.

Because reality cannot be fully perceived without this dimension of experience, pleasure may be necessary for growth—for thriving physically, developing emotionally, and relating these areas of development.

Health promotion may also depend on this state. Optimism, futurism, goal formulation, and other aspects of a healthy life style may be based on a state of primitive pleasure. Because primitive pleasure as the basic human state involves the concepts of freedom, rhythmical patterns, awareness, and variation, pleasure seems to be a force for putting people in touch with themselves and with their ways of interacting with the environment. Pleasure may increase the armamentarium for living and may be a force for expanding consciousness. Accomplishing these tasks might then define health promotion.

Primitive pleasure as the basic human state influences a healthy life style as one lives with the rhythms of the environment and one's own internal rhythms. One school of thought says pleasurable activities that parents provide for their children prevent depression, autism, sexual aberration, and drug abuse. Considerable evidence suggests that violence and aggressive behavior decrease when infants and children are provided physical sensory pleasure.^{9,11,12}

Primitive bodily pleasure may also play a role in healing. When one nurse queried all patients discharged during July 1983 from a hospital with a new patient education program, all patients identified bathing, rubbing, or some physical aspect of care as giving the most pleasure. The student's expectation had been that patients would describe good learning about self-care at home, an expectation based on the nurses'

pride in the new program (J. Christianson, personal communication, summer 1984).

Parental involvement

Not only do nurses express their goals as producing pleasure for patients, but activities of parents also are directed toward producing or restoring pleasure. When infants cry, concerned parental effort is directed toward restoring a pleasurable state by rectifying the source of discomfort. Their goal does not seem to be a neutral state; instead, their goal is an infant who is feeling good, comfortable, and even blissful.

Young children get many bruises and scratches as they use their bodies to explore the environment. Parents dealing with mishaps "kiss it to make it better" and offer tangible rewards with the goal of restoration of pleasure (not some neutral state). As one observes parents' daily activities in relation to each other and their children, much of this activity is geared to producing or restoring sensual pleasure. For example, when a parent must interfere with a child's pleasure the parent may be heard to say, "This hurts me more than it does you."

Problems defining primitive pleasure as the basic state

For various reasons, cognitive, emotional, and esthetic pleasures are not included in this discussion. First, these issues are beyond the scope of this article, and second, explaining intellectual or emotional components would provide an excuse for devaluing primitive pleasure or could prevent degenitalizing sensuous, carnal, purely physical pleasure. The important questions to confront are the place for primitive

pleasure in human existence and the relationship of primitive pleasure to health and healing.

One could argue that the Freudian concepts of pleasure and pain might actually deter developing knowledge about pleasure and its multiple function in human existence. Freudian notions might also deter looking at pleasure as initiated for itself or for health rather than for avoiding pain or coping with pain.

Impact on the health professions

Missing from this model are the usual dichotomies used in discussing pleasure: pleasure/pain, guilt/innocence, right/wrong, clean/dirty. While modern culture derives much meaning from pain, work, duty, submission, and cleanliness, it often neglects pleasure, especially primitive pleasure. Health professionals need not only models of the real world and the way things are but also models of the ideal and the way things could be. Professional practice operating according to "the way it really is" is often modified by current events. Modifications create a new idea of "this is the way it really is." If professional goals are based on ideals, practice may not create the ideal, but it will be related to that goal. Both "real" and "ideal" models are necessary for the practice of a profession.

Pleasure and nursing

Nightingale recognized that one nursing goal was promoting pleasure. She used the terms pleasure, cheer, refresh, good news, variety, enjoy, interesting, comfort, relief, and restore in discussing "means of giving pleasure to the sick."^{13(p102)}

This theory is still in an early stage of formulation. If it has any validity it clarifies

one goal of nursing. Parental and familial roles give priority to creating and maintaining the basic state. Nurses, as secondary agents, often compete with these primary agents and are always in danger of blame from primary agents for failing to create and maintain the pleasure state. Envy of secondary agents might also help to explain some social themes about nursing. Any role in which one is responsible for the pleasure of another is also fraught with danger. How much pleasure? What kind? What are acceptable limits of pleasure in health and learning? Nurses, primarily a group of women, may come to represent Eve as a luring temptress of evil, promoting pleasure over reason.

One cannot ignore that nurses have at least a partially Dionysian stance in an Apollonian (medical and scientific) world. Nurses need to look at the goal of produc-

Nurses need to look at the goal of producing sensual pleasure as an important outcome of their practice.

ing sensual pleasure as an important outcome of their practice. Once this is acknowledged as one aspect of the profession, all the threats inherent in social attitudes toward pleasure givers, especially women pleasure givers, will need to be explored and addressed. The profession will have to deal with primitive pleasure as a basic state and must overcome the tyranny of the genital obsession where the body has been desensitized and ecstatic pleasure invested in the genitalia.¹⁴

Nurses would deal with the divorce

between sensuousness and the body as depriving the body of life;¹⁵ the idea is that healing this schism makes one whole as opposed to mechanistic. Primitive or bodily pleasure contributes to unity and unity symbolizes healing and health. Nurses might view life as an intense interaction with the environment in which genital experience is no more intense than that of other body pleasure.¹⁵

The profession will also have to recognize that patients' ambivalence about nurses may have some of its roots in taking and giving pleasure. The nurse-patient dyad creates many kinds of conflict; these include conflicts among those who cannot give and those who cannot take, with those who cannot give enough, and those who cannot get enough.

Adherents of this theory would be forced to address the cultural theme that the body is a battleground. Marketing experts including health care professionals have invented a category of "illness" to sell to everyone. This "illness" says that people are at war with weak, evil bodies. To survive this illness they must kill germs, kill odors, keep clean, stay pure, and keep the besmirching environment at bay with soaps, creams, antiseptics, mouth washes, sprays, oils, powders, perfumes, deodorants, brushes, and pledgets. More intrusive are promotions for nose drops, swabs, gargles, douches, enemas, cathartics, vitamins, cold and hot showers and baths, as well as yogurt, bran, and blackstrap molasses. The size of the list alone suggests that the body is bad. A good body, true to itself and in tune with its internal and external self-knowledge, would seem to be basic for a theory of pleasure as a basic human state and for promotion of health.

If the propositions presented here can be supported, nursing goals in direct, nondelivered care might be to foster pleasure of intensity and variation relevant to patient needs in a rhythm consistent with patients'

own rhythms in living and to promote patient-environment interaction that provides primitive pleasure to enhance growth, healing, health, and a satisfying life style.

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