

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING WHEN ABROAD

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PREFACE:

The AESOHP programme (An Ecological Sense Of Healthy Place and Purpose) was established in 2000, in collaboration with the WHO Collaborating Centre for Tourist Health and Travel Medicine, Rimini, Italy, the World Health Organisation, and the Nuffield Trust, London, UK. Its work is a tribute to Dr. Ernst Philipp (1909-2000), former General Practitioner, New Zealand, life-long humanist, author, environmentalist, activist for sustainable development, and WHO-designated Futurist for the former WHO Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Promotion and Ecology, University of Bristol, England [1]. A principal hypothesis of the AESOHP research and education programme is that: *'Our mental health and emotional well-being are influenced by the aesthetic quality of our external environment: improved understanding of this association can influence our sensitivity to environmental qualities and help each of us to identify what we seek, can attain and wish to retain and enjoy for our health and well-being'*.

Details of the AESOHP programme have been published in the Proceedings of the 3rd European Conferences on Travel Medicine [2], and the report of the European Conference, 'Green Cities - Blue Cities of Europe', held in Forli, Italy, October 2000 [3], and in recent reports of The Nuffield Trust, London, UK [4], [5]. These publications and this present chapter provide collectively the framework of work encompassed by the AESOHP programme. In this work it is reasoned that: *"in our rapidly changing, insecure world, the humanities can contribute to humanitarian efforts, health and well-being"* [6]. For it, the medical humanities have been defined as: *"the study of human nature and the practice of compassionate concern for the advancement of mankind's welfare"* [6]. Details of the AESOHP projects are available from the programme director, Robin Philipp.

INTRODUCTION:

We all need holidays - The English poet, WH Davies put it very well in his poem, 'Leisure':

"What is this life if full of care
We have no time to stand and stare"

.... A poor life this if full of care
We have no time to stand and stare".

A holiday should not be just a change of place. It should foster a change of attitude, a different state of mind and a different focus of attention so that we

return home refreshed, stimulated, nourished and with renewed energy. For example, one study on a Crete beach found that people on holiday there read to retreat, relax, escape, restore '*balance within*', and to help buffer themselves against the year ahead [7].

But should we travel abroad? There are increasing concerns about:

- (a) Insecurity in many places, instability, uncertainty, threats to personal freedom and liberty, hooliganism, thuggery, robbery, and vandalism;
- (b) the behaviour of some tourists in some resorts;
- (c) the behaviour of some overseas-posted travel company representatives and other workers abroad;
- (d) the attitudes of some residents to visitors from elsewhere.

To help improve the opportunities for enjoyment and personal growth, better understanding of the needs and welfare of other people is required. For example, in an address to ambassadors at the White House to mark the first anniversary of the war on Iraq, and in the aftermath of recent appalling bombings, speaking it was reported for everyone, President Bush of the USA stated that: "*we do love life, the life given to us and to all. We believe in the values that uphold the dignity of life: tolerance and freedom and the right of conscience*" [8]. He noted that in his view there is no neutral ground in the fight between:

civilisation - and - terror
good - and - evil
freedom - and - slavery
life - and - death [8]

So, can we as individuals do anything about the situations we all find ourselves in, regardless of our denomination, race, colour, code, creed or any other affiliation?

Within the AESOHP programme there is increasing concern about some behaviours of travellers abroad and of some staff such as representatives of travel companies working in resorts overseas. Issues of concern include:

- alcohol and recreational drug use;
- sexually transmitted diseases;
- standards of safety associated with behaviour in occupational and leisure time activities;
- mental health and emotional well-being associated with working hours, work tasks, living conditions, isolation, peripatetic working, language barriers, sleep deprivation, and workplace stress from some clients and managers;
- cultural alienation among visitors and persons working abroad from host tourist-receiving communities and lack of respect for the cultures, customs and preferred habits of local residential populations;
- increasing uncertainty as to what lies ahead for society and for each of us personally in our at-present unsettled, insecure world.

The likelihood of experiencing these lifestyle health problems and of improved overall well-being can be influenced greatly by an increased sense of personal responsibility and individual accountability, heightened awareness of the importance of balancing personal freedom and collective responsibility, and by wider appreciation of the personal enjoyment that can be attained from having a greater sense of citizenship. It seems however that at present at least some Tour and Travel Operators due to the highly competitive, commercial nature of their industry, are not readily inclined to allocate resources to this area of prevention. Nevertheless, some host resorts have recently experienced considerable detrimental changes in their fortunes associated with the behaviour when abroad of some tour and travel operator staff and their clients. The health and safety issues need to be addressed [9].

It is therefore important to examine:

- (i) how present values associated with society, tourism, and the travel industry are determined;
- (ii) how, in the interests of improved valuing for sustainable development, the public health of host, tourist-receiving populations and the mental health and emotional well-being of travellers and staff abroad can be better evaluated.

It has been reasoned that the needs for improved understanding of individual accountability and personal responsibility and how they relate to values in society can be addressed by greater attention to the interdependence and importance of:

- the quality of our surrounding natural and built environments;
- the aesthetic component of '*health*' which is included in the WHO European Charter on Environment and Health, developed and promulgated by the Ministers of Health and Ministers of the Environment in Europe [10];
- the need reported by a WHO Inter-regional Consultation on Environmental Health for the aesthetic aspects of recreational value and mental health within '*healthy tourism*' to be addressed [11];
- the roles of creative endeavour and aesthetic appreciation in mental health and emotional well-being;
- improved understanding of how our personal attitudes, outlook and behaviour are influenced by a combination of all our actual (externally derived), and perceived (internal) experiences;
- heightened awareness of the factors needed for sustainable, economic development of society and within this, the increasing importance for wider, on-going investment in social capital and emotional economics [2], [3].

During 2004, this interdependence was again addressed with the Brighton Declaration [12]. It identified five global health action areas:

- health as a global public health good;
- health as a key component of global security;
- health as a key factor of global governance of interdependence;
- health as a responsible business practice and social responsibility;
- health as global citizenship.

The '*Community Health Gains Model*' developed for the AESOHP programme, provides an interdependent arts-science approach to help address these 'action areas' [2], [3], [13]. The model reasons that:

1. A community is more than a collection of individuals in that it has 'synergy' and not just 'summation'.
2. Becoming actively and constructively involved in a community gives a sense of belonging and helps to increase personal well-being.
3. 'Self-esteem' as a sense of personal value and worth, heightened morale and confidence, and 'well-being' as a feeling of contentment, happiness and health, are interdependent.
4. Heightened self-esteem, morale and confidence are likely to lead to a healthier lifestyle.
5. Creative expression through individual and group endeavour provides health-promoting opportunities that help individuals to improve their well-being, self-esteem, morale and confidence.
6. The art therapies and participation in 'arts for health' workshops can produce beneficial changes in cognition, feelings and behaviour.
7. Improved well-being and self-esteem lead to:
 - (a) reduced dependence and prescriptions for psychotropic medication;
 - (b) less repeat attendances at primary care services for health care and support;
 - (c) healthier lifestyles (less smoking, use of alcohol and addictive substances, improved diet and more physical exercise);
 - (d) less delinquency and crime;
 - (e) less sickness absence from school and work;
 - (f) healthy leisure time pursuits;
 - (h) greater participation in adult education and further learning courses.
8. The 'arts for health' movement and the involvement of artists in health care are public health strategies targeted to mental health promotion and emotional well-being and for which the evidence base is being strengthened steadily by peer-reviewed published research.

STRESSFUL EXPERIENCES ASSOCIATED WITH TRAVEL:

Despite our inherent belief in the essential strength, goodness and resilience of human beings, we can in our travel as well as at home, experience one or more of the '9 d's':

- disgust - at events we may observe;
- dismay - at what we can witness;
- despair - of how humanity conducts itself;
- despondency - about being unable to influence what is happening;
- distaste - of what is going on and trends in society;
- demoralisation - as to how easily people can become corrupted;
- distrust - of some others we may meet or travel with;
- disruption - of our plans;
- disobedience - of the law.

If we are not prepared for them, these experiences and their effects on us can be very upsetting.

TOWARDS PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING WHEN TRAVELLING:

The WHO definition of health: *"represents a balanced relationship of the body and mind and complete adjustment to the external environment"* [14]. The English poet, John Keats, explored this relationship when he asked: *"Do we retreat from the reality of the outer world into ourselves at times, or do we retreat from the pressures of the outside world into the reality of our inner selves?"* [15]. The doctor-poet, Dannie Abse, musing on this question in 1993, noted that: *"imaginative daydreaming is an escape from the precipitous pessimism of living or dealing with problems and the sphere of sorrows, and it is used to restore balance"* [15].

Yet, as the English poet, T.S. Eliot noted: *"human kind cannot bear very much reality"* [16]. It is therefore, as well as collectively in society, important for us to explore in these present times of considerable global insecurity, uncertainty and rapid change, what we can each do, whoever we are and wherever we are:

- to remain positive;
- to try to feel more settled in life and living;
- to contribute constructively towards helping the world becoming a better place for all its citizens;
- to allow everybody to be recognised for their own worth;
- to help everyone enjoy and fulfil their own potential.

To help ourselves, we should therefore try to identify ways to change:

- what we do or value;
- what we focus on and give priority to;
- how we think about a subject, topic, theme or situation [15].

WHAT TRAVEL-ASSOCIATED PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS CAN OCCUR AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC?:

Travellers have recognised:

- aculturalisation - a sense of loss, aloneness and of feeling apart;
- feelings of strangeness or helplessness;
- a general fear and fright of flying and associated claustrophobia;
- worry about mugging, assault, robbery, theft and other abuse;
- imagined and actual terrorist threats, violence, aggression, humiliation, abduction and intimidation;
- entrapment syndromes in airports, railway stations, hotels and other public places;
- frustration with travel delays;
- personal reactions to security checks, border interrogations, body searches and an associated sense of the loss of freedom, privacy and dignity;
- disgust / anxiety / distress at experiencing certain smells, sights, body touching, and the taste of some unfamiliar foodstuffs;
- travel fatigue - anhedonia, loss of interest, motivation and participation (associated often with dehydration and / or exhaustion associated with last minute pre-travel preparation, excitement, late nights and work pressures;

- jet lag - causing tiredness / lethargy / feeling weary / being emotionally detached, and a loss of sleep;
- motion sickness - which can be associated with psychological factors such as anxiety and excitement (children are for example less likely to experience it on the return journey), some smells, and visual experiences;
- loneliness, particularly if there is nobody with whom to share your experiences.

PERSONAL PREVENTIVE / REMEDIAL MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN:

To help reduce the likelihood or intrusiveness of psychological problems when travelling:

- get plenty of sleep;
- prepare yourself for the cultural differences, social mores, habits and customs where you will be with plenty of pre-travel education;
- check websites of the Foreign Office of your Government for their advisability of travelling and any restrictions or prohibitions in the area you intend to visit;
- ensure good pre-travel itinerary planning with built-in rest periods during the trip;
- prepare for your travel well in advance of it;
- help to ensure peace of mind through adequate insurance for undue travel delays, loss of baggage and personal possessions, theft, medical cover including ambulance transportation, repatriation, and possible collapse of the tour or travel company or agent, as well as cover for any 'dangerous activities' you may wish to take part in - some policies exclude for example interests such as: scuba diving, motorcycling, skiing and other winter sports, hang gliding, parachuting and trekking;
- reduce the likelihood of motion sickness by eating lightly before and during travel, finding a place on your transport that minimises movement such as near the wing of an aircraft, close to the centre of a boat and in the middle of a bus, being near an open window, avoiding reading, and taking preventatives available from a pharmacist or others such as ginger or peppermint;
- use mental distraction techniques to direct your attention away from the provoking sensory stimuli (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch) and from becoming introspective about any loss of well-being - such techniques can help adaptation to a new environment or circumstances; they include for example: visualisation methods, mantras, reading, and time spent in available 'quiet rooms' and chapels at airports or rail stations, or in museums, libraries and art galleries;
- adopt other relaxation techniques - such as deep breathing, self-hypnosis, tai chi, yoga, massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and spa treatments;
- have 'time out' rest periods as breaks from travel itineraries and from sight seeing;
- take regular physical exercise;
- try to educate yourself, come to understand better and develop your aesthetic sense of appreciation for what you are looking at, hearing, smelling, touching, and / or tasting;
- engage in some personally expressive, creative, artistic endeavour to record your experiences and impressions: examples include drawing, sketching, taking photographs or writing a diary, keeping a travelogue or crafting poems.

PERSONAL SECURITY WHEN ABROAD:

As well as the above general measures to help ensure you are in personal control when in different situations:

- do familiarise yourself when travelling with the emergency escape measures such as coach and carriage hatches, window breakage hammers and floorstrip lighting, and aircraft safety procedures;
- do wear clothing that is modest, respects local customs, standards and habits;
- do familiarise yourself in advance of other local customs, practices and habits such as when greeting people, being offered hospitality, or when eating and drinking;
- do keep to areas where there are other people you can trust;
- do carry a panic alarm or whistle to attract attention if needs be;
- do wear a wedding ring if you are a woman even if you are not married;
- do wear a security belt under your clothing with only those valuables you must carry with you such as your passport, money, personal papers and tickets;
- do carry the telephone numbers of your local or nearest consulate or embassy and consider registering with them;
- do try to travel with others you can trust, especially when in compartments on public transport such as trains and overnight ferries;
- do take evasive action by for example, crossing the street if you see a group of people ahead whom you are wary of or distrust;
- do remember that tiredness adds to the effects of alcohol and that if you are not especially careful, you may be exploited - useful excuses you can use if you are being pushed into consuming more than you wish include: (a) its effects on medication you 'might' be taking, (b) your religious beliefs, (c) pleading treatment for alcoholism that forbids you from imbibing, or (c) the need to drive a vehicle;
- do use a secure hotel safe for your valuables;
- do find a hotel which is centrally located in a town or village and which is in easy reach of eating places;
- do keep your bedroom door locked with the key half turned in the lock to prevent others inserting a key or by tying a cord closed from the inside with strong cord or wire and ensure you know the identity of any person knocking on the door before opening it and even then be sure you use the security/safety chain;
- do familiarise yourself with hotel and public building fire exits and escape routes;
- do take ear plugs with you to wear at night when sleeping in noisy places;
- do take advice about the advisability of using a knife-proof wired inner lining in your backpack;
- do not wear items of clothing that might attract any sort of attention you do not seek;
- do not hitch hike, especially on your own and check first if it is safe to use local taxis on your own - officially licensed ones are more likely to be safe than 'private vehicles for hire';
- do not walk, cycle or otherwise travel alone, especially at night or in deserted streets or other areas;
- do not wear jewellery or carry valuables outside your clothing and whenever possible keep your camera and watch out of sight;

- do not take short cuts through side lanes, across waste ground, parks, or places not well lit;
- do not make eye contact with strangers whose attention you do not wish to seek, and instead walk confidently and purposefully with your head up, and do not look afraid - wearing sunglasses can help;
- do not when travelling leave your luggage unattended;
- do not take part in demonstrations you do not understand;
- do not join in with large public gatherings at least until you have identified safe means of leaving the area, if necessary in a hurry.

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT FEELING INTIMIDATED:

To help prevent an '*entrapment syndrome*' through feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, and of being psychologically '*crowded in*' in by situation you find yourself in:

- avoid situations and environments where you could stand out in a crowd as being '*different*' and that might provoke actions by them;
- avoid or do not respond to provocation by individuals or groups;
- ignore unwanted attention or if this is not possible politely and if possible with a little humour, respond tactfully to it - one way of doing this is to comment positively and nicely about something they have or are saying;
- understand the '*herd instinct*' of crowd behaviour in which a group comes to act collectively in a way that no individual amongst them would have done individually;
- acknowledge the need we all have to preserve around us our '*personal space*';
- accept intimidation without any open blaming of the other person or a third party;
- be polite, firm and positive, dealing with awkward situations in a calm voice, without gesticulating or other rapid body movements and do not become aggressive, no matter how upset, frustrated or annoyed you may be feeling;
- if possible seek mediation through the involvement of persons in authority, and if needs be of the local Consul or Consular representative for your nationality;

ADDITIONAL ISSUES FOR WORKERS ABROAD:

Workers abroad include:

- representatives in resorts of travel and tour companies;
- hotel, sports and leisure activity staff;
- business people;
- construction workers;
- diplomats;
- foreign students;
- teachers;
- voluntary aid and charity staff;
- emergency workers.

They can experience '*culture shock*' [17]. This is the impact that all simultaneously occurring different factors can have on an individual. The possible effects include:

- insomnia;
- irritability;
- profound homesickness;
- depression;
- social withdrawal;
- behavioural disorders / changes - promiscuity (sexual, alcohol, drugs, crowd & 'herd' or other group activities);
- drug dependence;
- inability to cope [17].

The mental attributes for success in those who work abroad include:

- adaptability;
- confidence;
- proven ability in stressful situations;
- capacity to cope with separation from family, friends, business associates, and security of the home environment;
- a personal history of success, particularly abroad;
- a family history of stability and achievement [18].

To prevent culture shock when working abroad [17]:

1. accept that some culture shock is inevitable, it can be lonely and that it will take time to adjust;
2. limit the expectations of what you can achieve on a daily basis;
3. be satisfied with managing small tasks, especially at the beginning;
4. remember that you have survived other transitions before at each stage of your life;
5. take care of your physical health and get adequate sleep and take regular exercise;
6. don't abuse alcohol or other drugs;
7. find a mentor who is someone with experience and common-sense with whom you can discuss your troubles and share your successes;
8. do not withdraw from contact with other people even if you feel like it and they may not be entirely to your liking;
9. keep in touch with people at home by letters, postcards, e-mail and possibly short wave radio;
10. learn the local language;
11. learn and adopt local customs - for example with clothing, hospitality, laws, standards of health and social care, respect of animals and property, morals, codes of ethics, drinking and sources of entertainment;
12. make an effort to reach out to other people beyond your expatriate community, join clubs, cultural and social organisations, make new friends among other expatriates and local people and share experience, thoughts and feelings;
13. cultivate a positive attitude, and actively seek out the good, interesting and worthwhile things in life and with a sense of humour;
14. realise that on return to your home country that reverse culture shock can occur [17].

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH THROUGH IMPROVED PERSONAL UNDERSTANDING:

Improved understanding of ourselves and of other people would help considerably to reduce present psychological tensions within and between people. After all:

- experiences, upbringing and education shape our attitudes - they influence our morale, confidence and self-esteem;
- from our responses to personal experiences we can become motivated to be positive, active and to 'do' or 'act', or we can become demotivated to be negative and passive or to react, sometimes aggressively or violently;
- external events we experience and internal perceptions of them and of our thoughts, feelings and emotions all act within us as motivators / drivers;
- motivators influence our behaviour;
- we can respond positively and constructively or react negatively to the pressures we feel;
- pressures we experience motivate us to respond or react to situations and rise up to or succumb to challenges we identify;
- the motivators for our behaviour can be experienced as enjoyable and nourishing, or as precipitating stresses and strain within us;
- our positive responses to challenges and opportunities we identify or negative reactions to the stresses and strains we recognise are a reflection of our coping skills - we cope ('*copia*'), have difficulty coping ('*dyscopia*'), or cannot cope ('*acopia*');
- if we do not cope or continue to experience difficulty coping and do not deal with it or seek help we can experience 'burnout' from travel or in work associated with being abroad.

Seeking wisdom though acquiring understanding requires however our motivation for education. The more we read, study, talk to people, search the Internet and otherwise inquire before we travel, the more it prepares us for our trip and helps to open our minds to fresh insights, new ideas and different ways of looking at life and living. Through this learning process we can reduce considerably the negative effects of stress associated with travel and instead enjoy more what we gain from the travelling experience and how we can return from it enriched. But all this requires more widespread understanding and appreciation of the basis of human values.

THE BASIS OF HUMAN VALUES:

A 'value' has been defined as: "a set of principles which are consistent and inform and direct our thought, actions and activities" [19]. Empathy, rapport and intuition are at the basis of human values [20]. Being intuitive to the needs, wishes, aspirations, hopes and desires of others and supportive of them is fundamental to human development [21], [22].

What we 'value' and how we undertake our 'valuing' are therefore key issues for attempts to build the resource, 'social capital' [5], [21]. It seems at present that the value to both ourselves and others of 'emotional investment' and how we go about valuing its importance is not widely recognised. Yet, it fosters:

- a sense of belonging in a group;
- the personal warmth of having a wide circle of friends and a broad 'church' of friends whatever their denomination, affiliations, allegiances, alliances and orientation;
- broader understanding of the global community;
- the feeling of closeness to the humanity of others through better understanding of 'who they are', 'what they are about', and 'where they are coming from' in their thoughts, ideas interests, aspirations, hopes, ideals and values;
- an interest and stakeholding in the health economics concept of 'mutual investment of different people for their shared personal emotional gain';
- financial savings for lost time and other costs of disputes, litigation and legal proceedings.

The AESOHP programme has modelled the basis of human values. It has four components:

1. **THE BASIS: Civilisation, Culture, Customs and Society:**

(ie. *accepted ways and values of an organised group for behaving and acting which represent the place and purpose in it of its individuals*):

These factors depend on whether we have, understand and accept both a personal appreciation of the external fabric of society and how this impinges on us, and a conscious perception of what is important in it for ourselves. For each of us to truly feel comfortable, there needs to be a synthesis of how we feel ('*the inner*') and of what happens to us ('*the outer*') environmental factors, and in which there is symbiosis and '*resonance*' rather than any imbalance, parasitic relationship, '*discord*' or '*dissonance*'.

In this process, in accordance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights [23], the diversity of individuals is recognised as is their equality of opportunity, treatment, benefits, and status, and freedom from discrimination [24]. Diversity recognises:

- the various genetic traits and personal characteristics that make individuals the same or different from one another;
- the qualities of differences in factors such as nationhood, culture, ethnicity, generation, backgrounds, skills, and abilities, values, gender, disability, sexuality, age, religious affiliation, and social, economic and health status [24].

An '**ethnic group**', has for example and for the purposes of the Race Relations Act 1976, United Kingdom, been defined as '*one that must regard itself and be regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of:*

- (a) a long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive;
- (b) a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance;

- (c) either a common geographical origin or descent from a small number of common ancestors;
- (d) a common language, not necessarily peculiar to the group;
- (e) a common literature peculiar to the group;
- (f) a common religion different from that of neighbouring groups or from the general community surrounding it;
- (g) being in a minority or being oppressed or a dominant group within a larger community' [24].

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), definition of '**culture**' states that it should be regarded as: "*the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs*" [23].

2. **THE EXTERNAL FACTORS:**

The principal environmental factors impinging on each of us are:

- (i) **Philosophy** - a basis of wisdom in society acquired through experience, knowledge and understanding;
- (ii) **Law and Justice** - systems to safeguard and strengthen a consensus for what is reasonable and appropriate;
- (iii) **Codes of Ethics & Morals** - what is considered acceptable, reasonable and decent;
- (iv) **The Arts** - the skilful execution of imaginative skills applied to design, thought or the way a task is undertaken;
- (v) **Professionalism & Pride** - concepts closely linked with ethics & the arts [25];
- (vi) **Science & Technology** - systematic and formalised knowledge and its diligent and practical application;

3. **THE INTERNAL FACTORS:**

Our personal perceptions are influenced by a sense of:

- (i) **Spirituality** - the feeling of meaning and purpose in our lives;
- (ii) **Belief** - our religion, faith, or doctrine that gives us both an external structure and internalised system of support to which we entrust ourselves;
- (iii) **Aesthetic Appreciation** - our sense of personal wonder, pleasure and well-being coming from the appreciation of beauty;
- (iv) **Consciousness** - an awareness of our thoughts, feelings and emotions;

(v) **Conscience** - our appreciation for what is right and wrong, proper and appropriate;

(vi) **Humanity** - our interest and study of the innate qualities and characteristics of human nature, appreciation of human values and the unique ability of the human spirit to express itself, and practice of compassionate concern for the welfare of mankind;

4. **THE COMBINATION WITHIN OURSELVES OF EXTERNAL & INTERNAL FACTORS:**

Each separate external and internal factor and their combined interactions produce in each of us a resonance or dissonance that fosters:

- i) **Awareness** - of ourselves;
- ii) **Interest** - in what is happening and going on around us;
- iii) **Motivation** - to become actively involved and take a constructive, positive part in what is going on or to reject it, object and retaliate;
- iv) **Communication** - with others and with our own feelings;
- v) **Engagement, Involvement & Participation** - in what is going on;
- vi) **Actions** - to enjoy and support or to destroy and negate what is happening.

At least within the AESOHP programme, it is believed that wider understanding is needed of the basis of human values in society and with better appreciation of the enrichment to society of cultural diversity. For this to occur, education is necessary for individuals to understand more readily how within each of us these above factors interact.

Attention to education would benefit wider understanding of the value of emotional investment. It would help us to build and strengthen social capital. This in turn would help to reduce the present levels of personal distress and global tension associated with travel. Such education could examine how the following seven inter-related points interact:

1. Events, facts, experiences, upbringing and education all mould our '*perception*'. Or, in other words, how we each look outwards at the world around us and how this influences what we '*see*' and in turn how we respond or react. '*Reality*' is therefore a combination of being an '*internal perception*' and an '*external set of factors*'.
2. Data are gathered from events and sieved and sorted in our minds.
3. Information is interpreted from the collated data.
4. Knowledge accumulates within us as a theoretical or practical '*body*' of understanding. It is assimilated from the information gathered.
5. Our understanding is improved from perceiving the significance, meaning or reasoning arising from this knowledge.

6. Wisdom develops from a combination of knowledge and experience. It implies the power of applying these two qualities critically or practically.
7. Acquired wisdom helps us to manage ourselves and our lives. It thereby benefits our psychological health and emotional well-being.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FROM IDENTIFYING WITH THE IMAGERY OF PLACE AND PURPOSE:

Social capital is an important resource. It encompasses human factors of talent, capability, creativity, innovation and knowledge. It also includes the sense of realising one's potential and achieving self-fulfilment [21]. The arts and 'an artistic way' of looking at the world are increasingly being used to help strengthen social capital. The aesthetic dimension to health has an important role in this to help build our resources for improved emotional resilience [2-7], [23].

Sir Donald Acheson, a former Chief Medical Officer of the Department of Health, England, has reported for example that: "*Cities need to provide nourishment for the human spirit. Their planning, design and aesthetics must combat the feelings of anonymity and voicelessness, of loneliness and solitude of which so many writers speak*" [26]. In support of such statements, and the Report in 1997 of the WHO Inter-regional Consultation on Environmental Health calling for the aesthetic component of healthy tourism to be addressed [11], the AESOHP programme has noted that the purposes of art in the environment are to:

- enrich the lives of people;
- help alleviate stress and boredom;
- provide reassurance, comfort and humour;
- give purpose and dignity to an area;
- encourage public use of an area;
- improve way finding systems and establish landmarks [2], [3].

From experience to date among Occupational Physicians, the following practical applications for the arts have been suggested:

- "*among staff in different workplaces there could be roles in mental health and emotional well-being for visualisation techniques and virtual reality sound and visual viewsapes*";
- "*wider use of metaphor and imagery with the written and spoken word could help to improve the quality of communication*";
- "*attention to the quality of art and decor and to uses of artworks in the work environment might help to alleviate stress and burnout, improve morale and emotional well-being and reduce sickness absence*";
- "*we can direct patients towards productive social activities outside work with their associated health benefits*";
- "*we can with the arts help to ease the burdens many people carry*";
- "*the art as well as the science of what we do deserves further inquiry as applications of the arts and humanities can help people to have fuller, happier, more enjoyable lives*" [6].

The arts are also being used to address cultural and social problems in society such as alienation, frustration, anger, disruption, humiliation and dislocation, and marginalisation from employment [23].

Approaches to the aesthetic dimensions of health through uses of the arts have also been discussed at previous WHO meetings [2], [3]. Details of these presentations are available on e-mail request to Robin.Philipp@ubht.swest.nhs.uk.

To help develop further possibilities for the arts and health, the AESOHP programme has identified two words, *'tootling'*, and *'doodling'*. They can be used to describe aspects of psychological and emotional support to be gained from people identifying with roles of the arts for the imagery of place and purpose. Both of these terms are associated with aesthetic appreciation and creative endeavour:

The English word *'tootle'*, is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "to move casually along". It describes the pleasure to be had from using environments of high aesthetic quality to enhance personal experience. *'Tootling'* can be seen as an activity *'in which there is environmental opportunity of sufficient aesthetic quality to be able to enjoy oneself, reflect, daydream and forget the pressures of daily living, abandon oneself to the pleasures of rhythm and exercise and resonate with the beauty of what surrounds one's being'* [2], [27]. Children for example are encouraged to develop this sort of environmental understanding with *'sensory walks'* during which they are alerted to underfoot sidewalk texture, pedestrian choreography, smells, sounds, weather, clothes, trees, colours and art, and experience running, dawdling, and asking the way; one of the goals is to increase awareness and provide a foundation for personal growth [28].

The word *'doodling'* is related to tootling. It is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "drawing or scrawling absent-mindedly". It is an activity undertaken by artists and derived from similar opportunities to tootling. Doodling can be thought of as a creative endeavour with *'the free and spontaneous expression of what the mind is experiencing from its connections of thoughts, feelings and emotions and when allowed to meander gently without specific purpose or intent'* [2]. It encompasses activities such as sketching, drawing, painting, sculpting, photography, composing music, writing poetry and dance.

Experiencing art and the arts associated with travel and the imagery of place and from activities such as tootling and doodling benefits psychological well-being and emotional resilience by helping to:

- replenish the spirit;
- nourish the soul;
- stimulate the mind, and;
- fuel the imagination.

These effects are consequent of certain patterns of movement and sound experienced through the five bodily senses and influencing the limbic system. They can evoke a resonance or positive feeling within oneself that imparts a sense of emotional well-being [29]. The Irish poet, W.B. Yeats, illustrates well

the roles of this imagery of place and its purpose and the often perceived psychological benefits in his poem, 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree':

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

.... I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey
I hear it in the deep heart's core."

Environmental psychologists, architects, developers, urban planners and public health consultants have used the recognised psychological benefits of imagery of place to good purpose for residents, tourists and other visitors. For example, in the UK, 'town planning' has been defined as: "*the art and the science of ordering the land-uses and siting the building of communication routes so as to secure the maximum level of economy, convenience and beauty*" [30]. The importance of incorporating 'beauty' is embodied within:

- increasing recognition that living in walking distance of parks and green spaces increases the life expectancy of city dwellers and that the health status of people living on social housing estates is determined largely by the quality of their immediate surroundings rather than their housing conditions [31];
- awareness, reported by WHO that: "*What people see when they open their front door has a profound effect on their health*", and that social behaviour can be influenced by the environment, including perceptions of crime and security, and levels of stress, depression and general irritation [31];
- better understanding that environmental enrichment can be gained from the sensitive incorporation of aesthetic sensory qualities such as the balance of spatial arrangement, unity, variety, pattern, line, form, shape, colour, tone and harmony [2];
- recognition of the role of '*environmental corridors*' as connecting passages and in themselves places between two or more other places, and which have their own qualities of identity and purpose, imagery and expression, such that passing through or being in them evokes an emotional response of either positive feelings of resonance, enjoyment, pleasure and a sense of well-being, or negative feelings of displeasure and discomfort in being there [3];
- uses of art and water features like fountains in public parks, squares, streets and buildings such as hospitals, libraries, schools, shopping centres and office buildings, to open up spaces, provide landmarks for wayfinding and to give opportunities for expression, comment, humour, enjoyment, contemplation and reflection [3];
- commissioning art works for display in the Metro transport systems of cities such as Brussels, Amsterdam, Toronto, Munich, Prague and Stockholm [32];
- placing poems with thoughtful, warm, resonating, uplifting, short, readily understood and thematic qualities in public places such as, in the UK, in General Practice surgeries and the London Underground, and in Moscow in the Moskovsky Metropolitien, to help soothe the temperament of visitors [3];
- aims and objectives of international '*arts and health*' organisations such as the UK-based Association for the Literary Arts in Personal Development (LAPIDUS) [5], and the USA-based National Association for Poetry Therapy (NAPT);

- the incorporation of '*Quiet Rooms*' in public buildings such as airports and other large transport terminals, for rest and in support of the WHO Healthy Settings approach [2];
- the use of virtual reality touch screens for people to access different forms of music in health care seclusion rooms and in support of their vulnerability and insecurity when facing uncertainty and unfamiliar settings, and so as to help reduce their pulse rate, blood pressure and stress associated with heightened alertness in such situations;
- the introduction of a '*dark skies*' policy by some supermarkets in which their car parks have downward-facing lighting to reduce light pollution and so that the stars are rendered more visible [33];
- introduction of Japanese and Zen gardens in open courtyards of factories, theatres, concert halls, shopping malls, libraries, hospitals, public and office buildings, to increase the feelings of viewsapes, space and light, and to integrate an indoor-outdoor quality with a natural environment, tranquil, restful theme;
- noise control and attenuation measures such as the New York revised Noise Code for barking dogs, car alarms, motorbikes, night-clubs and ice cream van chimes, street calming schemes, and noise barriers and screens at airports and alongside urban through routes;
- etiquette when using mobile phones in Italy whereby one hand is cupped in front of the mouthpiece to help block sound transmission.

These methods have been applied with local cost-effective gains for income generation from tourism, business development, and inward financial investment to different localities. For example, the '*blandscape blight*' of some urban development has been transformed with '*viewsapes*' and imaginative, friendly, environmentally sensitive architecture that fosters resonance between individual visitors, residents and workers in an area, and with their surrounding, external environment [3]. There are many examples of where: "*architectural vision meets engineering genius ... transcending their locations and feeding the imagination*" [34]. Based on their appearances, affectionate names or descriptions are sometimes attached to these icons.

A few examples of this aesthetic approach include:

- the Piazza San Marco, Venice, described by Napoleon as: "*the most beautiful drawing room in Europe, for which it is only fitting that the heavens should serve as ceiling*" [35];
- the Rialto bridge, Venice, immortalised by Shylock's speech about Antonio in Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*;
- the Pompidou Arts Centre, Paris;
- the Guggenheim museum, Bilbao, Spain;
- the Stockholm Metro system described as "*the longest art gallery in the world*" [32];
- the Clifton Suspension bridge, Bristol, England;
- the new London, UK, Swiss Re Insurance office building comprising a glossy, 40-storey, circular, tapering latticework structure and appropriately nicknamed '*the erotic gherkin*' [36];
- a somewhat phallic-shaped, pink marble outdoor public sculpture in Basingstoke, Hampshire, England, labelled by popular local acclaim as '*The Basingstoke Willie*';

- the Golden Gate bridge, San Francisco, California, USA;
- the New Zealand Parliament building, Wellington, New Zealand, nicknamed "The Beehive";
- labelling of 'viewshafts' for the maintained, planned, open, unobstructed urban landscape views towards the 'cone zones' of extinct volcanoes in Auckland, New Zealand, giving it much of its environmental character;
- the Sydney Opera House, Australia, resembling the spinnaker sails of several yachts;

WHAT IS NOW NEEDED TO HELP FOSTER PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING WHEN ABROAD?

Education is the key to improved psychological health and emotional well-being when abroad. Travel companies, tour organisers, resort staff, resort planners, architects, and builders, social geographers, public health consultants and community educators could do much more to heighten awareness of the psychological benefits of travel, improve sensitivity to cultural issues in areas that are foreign to visitors from abroad, and to improve understanding of the needs of others and the benefits of emotional investment in the arts for strengthening social capital and benefiting the emotional reserve and resilience of individuals.

Theme tourism is one such approach that is growing in popularity. It includes:

- sustainable and eco-tourism in which there is heightened valuing of local, traditional values such that visitors '*leave only footprints*';
- spa hotels and holistic holiday centres involving for example, unspoilt natural environments, therapeutic bathing in natural settings, massage, meditation and nature walks, yoga, and tai chi;
- cultural / special interest holidays such as to archaeological sites, gardens, museums, art galleries and cultural sites such as places where writers lived and artists painted, and including activities such as music and opera appreciation, arts festivals, painting, pottery, sculpture and creative writing opportunities, literary and other arts walks, talks and tours;
- sports-associated tourism such as active participation in sailing, tennis, golf, canoeing, mountaineering, trekking, skiing and snowboarding, or supportive such as accompanying and following the team game sports of rugby, football, hockey, softball, and cricket.

CONCLUSIONS: The way we look outwards at the world influences our perception of it, our values of what we believe is truly important in it, and what we do with our lives in this world we inhabit. In this we each have a responsibility to help encourage human understanding and ensure that environmental values and opportunities are sustained [3]. We can, it is recognised: "*consciously alter our behaviour by changing our values and attitudes to regain the spirituality and ecological awareness we have lost*" [37].

The identified public health needs and findings of recent studies including the worth to industry and society of investment in social capital, justify steps that should now be taken to ensure the psychological health and emotional well-being of persons when abroad. Improved education is in the interests of both sustainable development and to ensure happier, healthier travellers and workers

abroad as well as better health for local residents. The material presented here could be included in educational programmes for travellers. Indeed, some of it such as that pertaining to personal security when abroad is already readily available [17].

There is lastly for many of us and at a very fundamental, personal level, often a special place where we like to travel and be, that has special meaning for us in our lives, and which has its own 'reality' we wish to preserve. Being there resonates within us and can give us a deep feeling of contentment and peace. Even when away from our special place, reflecting on this resonance can give us a strong sense of belonging and pleasure. This feeling is emotionally enriching and can help to renew, restore and replenish our sense of enjoyment, direction and purpose in life. It can also encourage us, each in our own ways, to be active and involved, and to strive to help in a constructive, positive way with what is going on around us in our world. Our resonance with this imagery of a special place and a sense of purpose nourishes our sense of psychological health and emotional well-being. As one example of this feeling, it can be put like this:

Back Here

What it is to be
Back here in the sun
Lying on my back;

Back to the land
Touched by the grass
Kissed by the sky;

Absorbed with the clouds
Hearing the crickets
Tuned to the birds;

Breathing the air
Floating my thoughts
Stilling my mind;

It is here for me
Inspired warmed
Renewed refreshed;

Relaxed content
Again I connect
Living my dreams. R.P.

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