

A black and white photograph of a person sitting on a wooden bench, viewed from behind. The person is looking out over a body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river. The sky is overcast and grey. There are trees on both sides of the bench, with some bare branches visible. The ground in the foreground is wet and reflective, suggesting it might have recently rained. The overall mood is contemplative and somewhat somber.

What You Should Know About Mental Disorders

What You Should Know About Mental Disorders

Awake![®]

IN THIS ISSUE

- 7 WATCHING THE WORLD
- 8 HELP FOR THE FAMILY
How to Compromise
- 10 Big Eyes—Tiny Body!
- 12 INTERVIEW
A Professor of Financial Accounting Explains His Faith
- 14 THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT
The Earth
- 16 **Subject Index for 2014**
Awake!

"I felt as though I had my breath knocked out of me," says Claudia, who had just been told she had bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. "Dealing with the stigma of a mental illness seemed overwhelming."

"It took a long time to come to terms with our situation," says Claudia's husband, Mark. "But I realized that I had to focus on supporting my wife."

IF YOU or someone you love were diagnosed with a mental disorder, how would you feel? Thankfully, mental illness can be treated. Let us examine a few things you should know that will give you a better understanding of mental disorders.*

* For the sake of consistency, in this article the term "mental disorder" includes mental illnesses as well as behavioral and psychiatric disorders.

Vol. 95, No. 12 / Monthly / ENGLISH
Printing Each Issue: 44,748,000 in 99 Languages

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Awake!* 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

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Key Facts About Mental Health

- “Mental disorders afflict hundreds of millions of people in every part of the world and impact on the lives of their loved ones. One in four people will be affected by mental disorder at some point in their lives. Depression is the single largest contributor to worldwide disability. Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are among the most severe and disabling disorders. . . . Although huge numbers of people are affected, mental disorders remain hidden, neglected and discriminated against.”—World Health Organization (WHO).
- According to WHO, many people with mental illness refrain from seeking treatment because of the stigma associated with it.
- Although most mental disorders are treatable, in the United States approximately 60 percent of adults and almost 50 percent of youths aged 8 to 15 with a mental disorder did not receive treatment in the past year, reports the National Alliance on Mental Illness.



Understanding Mental Disorders

What is mental illness? Experts define a mental disorder as a significant dysfunction in a person's thinking, emotional control, and behavior. The condition often disrupts a person's ability to relate to others and to deal with the demands of life.

The severity of symptoms can vary in length and intensity, depending on the individual and the particular ailment and circumstances. It can affect people of any gender, age, culture, race, religion, or educational and income level. Mental-health disorders are not the result of personal weakness or a character flaw. Through appropriate medical care, individuals can be treated and can live a productive and fulfilling life.

Mental-health disorders are not the result of personal weakness or a character flaw



Treating Mental Disorders

Mental-health professionals can treat many mental-health disorders successfully. The first crucial step, then, is to obtain a thorough assessment from a competent health professional who is experienced in treating mental conditions.

Sufferers, however, can benefit from such experience only when they accept suitable treatment. This may require overcoming any reluctance to talk to others about a mental illness. Treatment may include talking to trained mental-health professionals who can help them understand their illness, resolve practical problems, and reinforce the need not to give up the treatment. At such consultations, a family member or friend can play a vital role by providing reassurance and support.

Many people have learned to deal with mental disorders after acquiring a better understanding of their condition and following the treatment prescribed by mental-health professionals. "Before my wife was diagnosed," says Mark, quoted earlier, "we had little understanding of mental illness. But we've learned to take life one step at a time and adapt to our situation. Over time, we have benefited from the support of reliable professionals as well as family and friends."

Claudia agrees. "In the beginning, my diagnosis felt like a prison sentence," she

The first crucial step is to obtain a thorough medical assessment from a competent health professional



Spiritual Health Is Vital

admits. “But even though my illness places limitations on both of us, I have learned that seemingly impossible hurdles can be overcome. So I cope with my mental illness by working together with my treatment team, nurturing relationships with others, and taking one moment at a time.”

The Bible does not indicate that spirituality cures medical problems. Still, many families around the world have derived much comfort and strength from what the Bible teaches. For instance, the Bible assures us that our loving Creator is keenly interested in consoling those who are “brokenhearted” and “crushed in spirit.” —Psalm 34:18.

LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

“There are times when the feeling of panic makes some activities seem impossible, and there are days when I can’t even concentrate well enough to read. At other times, the darkness of depression makes me avoid contact with others, even good friends. Some try to help by suggesting that things will get better soon or that things aren’t as bad as I think they are. Others tell me to look on the brighter side of life. But I have tried to do that countless times! Even though comments like these are well-meant, they simply increase the feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and failure I already experience.”—Claudia, South Africa.

While the Bible is not a health-care book, it provides practical guidance that can help us to cope with painful emotions and distressing circumstances. The Bible can also give us hope for a future when life on earth will be free of illness and pain. God’s Word promises: “At that time the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. At that time the lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the speechless will shout for joy.”—Isaiah 35:5, 6.

DEALING WITH MENTAL DISORDERS

1. Follow the treatment prescribed by qualified mental-health professionals.*
2. Maintain a balanced and stable daily routine.
3. Stay physically active.
4. Get enough sleep.
5. Take time each day to relax.
6. Eat a nutritious and balanced diet.
7. Limit alcohol consumption and drugs that are not prescribed for you.
8. Avoid isolation; spend time with people whom you trust and who care for you
9. Give attention to your spiritual needs.†

* *Awake!* does not endorse any particular medical treatment. Christians should be sure that any treatment they pursue does not conflict with Bible principles.

† See also the article “Stress—Keys to Managing It,” in the May 2014 issue of *Awake!*





BRITAIN

British scientists have announced that an Icelandic mollusk thought to be about 405 years old was actually 507 years old at its untimely death in 2006. This makes it the **longest-lived animal*** on record. The clam died when researchers froze it in order to transport it to their lab.

* Here the term "longest-lived animal" excludes colonial organisms, such as coral, which are thought to have lived for thousands of years.



GERMANY

On Christmas Day, about one third more heart-attack patients are admitted to hospitals than at any other time of the year, according to one survey by an insurance company. The company suggests that **increased stress** when searching for Christmas gifts and unreasonably high expectations on the part of family and friends are the principal causes.



Dead Sea: © Francesco Tomasini/age fotostock

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

At a summit held in Havana, Cuba, earlier this year, the 33 member nations of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States declared their lands to be a **'peace zone'** by agreeing to resolve conflicts between themselves without the use of force. Among those present was United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

ISRAEL, JORDAN, AND PALESTINE

The **Dead Sea is shrinking** at the rate of about three feet (1 m) per year. Some fear that the lake could dry up completely by the year 2050. Officials are seeking a solution. One option under study is to desalinate water from the Red Sea for human consumption and then pipe the desalination by-product, brine, into the Dead Sea. Critics fear that the scheme will harm the unique ecosystem of the Dead Sea.



How to Compromise



THE CHALLENGE

You and your spouse have different preferences on something. Realistically, you have at least three options:

1. You could stubbornly **insist** until you get your way.
2. You could passively **surrender** to your spouse's wishes.
3. Both of you could **compromise**.

'But I don't like the idea of compromise,' you might say. 'It sounds as if *neither* of us will get what we want!'

Be assured that compromise need not be a lose-lose proposition—not if you do it right. But before considering *how* to compromise, there are a few things you should know about this vital skill.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Compromise requires teamwork. Before marriage, you might have been accustomed to making unilateral decisions. Now things have changed, and both you and your spouse must put your marriage above your personal preferences. Rather than think of that as a drawback, consider the advantage. "The ideas of two people combined can lead to a solution that is better than what each one could come up with alone," says a wife named Alexandra.

Compromise requires an open mind. "You don't have to agree with everything your spouse says or believes, but you have to be honestly open to *considering* his or her position," writes marriage counselor John M. Gottman. "If you find yourself sitting with your arms folded and shaking your head no (or just thinking it) when your spouse is trying to talk out a problem with you, your discussion will never get anywhere."*

Compromise requires self-sacrifice. No one enjoys living with a spouse who believes "it's either my way or the highway." It is far better when both partners have a self-sacrificing disposition. "There are times when I yield to my husband to make him happy, but at times he does the same for me," says a wife named June. "That's what marriage should be about—give and take, not just take."

* From the book *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Start right. The tone in which a discussion begins is often the tone in which it ends. If you start with harsh words, the chances of reaching a peaceful compromise are slim. So follow the Bible's advice: "Clothe yourselves with . . . compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience." (Colossians 3:12) Such qualities will help you and your spouse to avoid arguing and get down to the work of problem solving.—*Bible principle: Colossians 4:6.*

Search for common ground. If your attempts at compromise only escalate into heated arguments, it may be that you and your spouse are focusing too much on where your views *differ*. Instead, pinpoint where they *agree*. To help you find common ground, try this:

Each of you make a two-column list. In the first column, write down which aspects of the issue you feel most strongly about. In the second column, list the aspects on which you feel that you could compromise. Then discuss your lists together. You might find that the aspects that you both feel strongest about are not really all that incompatible. If so, compromise should not be too difficult. Even if they *are* incompatible, having all aspects of the matter on paper will help you and your spouse to see the issue more clearly.

Brainstorm. Some issues may be relatively easy to settle. With more complex issues, however, a husband and wife can strengthen their bond by brainstorming a solution that perhaps neither of them would have come up with alone.—*Bible principle: Ecclesiastes 4:9.*

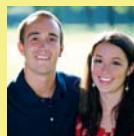
Be willing to adjust your view. The Bible says: "Each one of you must love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband." (Ephesians 5:33) When love and respect flow freely, both spouses are willing to consider the other's viewpoint—and even be swayed. A husband named Cameron says, "There are things you would rather not do but—thanks to the influence of your spouse—you later come to love."—*Bible principle: Genesis 2:18.* ■

KEY SCRIPTURES

"Let your words always be gracious, seasoned with salt."
—Colossians 4:6.

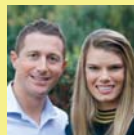
"Two are better than one."
—Ecclesiastes 4:9.

"It is not good for the man to continue to be alone. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him."—Genesis 2:18.



**CAMERON AND
DANITRIA**

"If you were to do all the things *you* want and not listen to your spouse or give your spouse a chance to express another view, you would be living as if you were still single."



**BRAD AND
KARLEE**

"Both partners should feel that they have been heard and have had a part in the decision-making process. That kind of compromise builds a 'team' atmosphere rather than a power struggle."

BIG EYES TINY BODY!

MOST would call it cute; some might call it bizarre. It has spindly legs, soft fur, and huge shining eyes. Its body is about five inches (12.5 cm) in length, and it weighs about four ounces (114 g). What is it? It is the tarsier!

Let's take a closer look at one of these creatures, the Philippine tarsier. Its eyes, ears, hands, feet, legs, and tail all seem too big for its tiny body. Yet, a closer look at this oddity reveals ingenious design.



Protecting the Tarsier

In 1997, the government of the Philippines declared the Philippine tarsier a “specially protected” species. Hence, it is illegal to hunt it, damage its habitat, or even keep it as a pet. The tarsier enjoys the affection of the Filipino people and is an icon for tourism.

HEARING: The tarsier's paper-thin ears can furl, unfurl, and turn to pick up the faintest sounds. Its keen hearing helps it not only to avoid predators, such as wild cats, but also to locate prey. After dark, the tarsier's ears will tune in to the sound of crickets, termites, beetles, birds, and frogs. Then its whole head will follow, directing those bulging eyes toward its prospective meal.

GRIP: The tarsier's hands are tailor-made for grasping thin branches. Its fingertips have distinctive pads with ridges that grip like the tread on a tire. Even while sleeping, the tarsier needs to hang on tight. Ridges on the underside of its long tail help it to remain firmly propped in position until it wakes up.



VISION: No other mammal has eyes that are as large in comparison with the size of its body. In fact, each of the tarsier's eyes is larger than the animal's brain! The tarsier's eyes cannot turn in their sockets; they always stare straight ahead. Is this design a disadvantage? Not really. The tarsier is adequately compensated, as it has a flexible neck that allows it to turn its head 180 degrees in either direction.

AGILITY: The tarsier's long legs give it the strength to jump a distance of up to 20 feet (6 m)—more than 40 times its own length! When hunting, the little predator leaps into the darkness with fingers outstretched to grab its victim with pinpoint accuracy.



Tarsiers rarely survive in captivity, partly because of their voracious appetite for live insects as well as their aversion to being handled. Still, this unique creature continues to fascinate the Filipino people. Almost every part of this endearing bug-eyed forest dweller is a surprise. ■



A Professor of Financial Accounting Explains His Faith

Professor Stephen Taylor teaches and conducts research at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. He studies financial markets and ways they might be effectively regulated. *Awake!* asked him how his research has influenced his religious beliefs.

Tell us about your background.

I was raised by churchgoing parents who were honest and hardworking. They encouraged me to get a good education, so I studied commerce at the University of New South Wales. I discovered that I liked research and decided to pursue a career as an academic.

What area of research did you pursue?

I especially wanted to understand how stock markets work.* Stock markets allow people to buy and sell shares in companies that then use the funds to run their businesses. Among other things, I research the factors that influence company share prices.

*Also called share or equity markets.

Can you give us an example?

Companies are expected to report their earnings regularly. Investors consider these reports when trying to discern the financial health of a company. But some methods used to report profits are not standardized. Critics may view this as a loophole in the system that allows companies to hide their true value and profitability. How can investors obtain accurate and complete information? What facts do regulators need to have to ensure that financial markets operate fairly? My colleagues and I are currently trying to find answers to those questions.

Studying the Bible was the best “investment” I ever made

What is your religious background?

I regularly attended the Presbyterian Church with my parents but drifted away from religion during my teens. I believed in a Creator and respected the Bible but suspected that religion was irrelevant when it came to life's problems. To me, religious groups seemed more like social clubs. In Europe, I visited several large churches and wondered why they held so much wealth when the world was full of poverty. I found this contrast really challenging and became quite skeptical of religion.

What changed your view?

My wife, Jennifer, started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending their meetings, so I thought that I had better go along with her and check them out. I soon discovered that I knew almost nothing about the Bible. That was a shock! So I started studying the Bible with the Witnesses.

The Witnesses' study method really impressed me. They

raised questions, gathered and analyzed evidence, and then drew logical conclusions—methods I used in academic research! In 1999, a few years after Jennifer was baptized, I too was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Has your knowledge of economics strengthened your trust in the Bible?

Definitely. For example, the Law code that God gave to ancient Israel addressed economic problems that still challenge economists today. The Law required the Israelites to set aside produce for the poor (a form of taxation and insurance), grant the needy interest-free loans (ensure access to credit), and restore hereditary lands to their original owners every 50 years (protect property rights). (Leviticus 19:9, 10; 25:10, 35-37; Deuteronomy 24:19-21) These and other economic provisions helped people in three important ways: They (1) supported them through financial reversals, (2) helped them recover from long-term poverty, and (3) alleviated economic inequality—and all of that more

than 3,000 years before the birth of economics as a science!

The Bible also emphasizes attitudes and behaviors that promote economic security. For example, it teaches people to be honest, trustworthy, compassionate, and generous. (Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 25:15; Psalm 15) Interestingly, following the recent global financial crisis, some business schools and organizations began urging business and finance professionals to pledge to uphold certain ethical standards. The Bible's moral standards, in my opinion, far surpass those business creeds.

How has your faith affected you personally?

Well, Jennifer tells me I've become more reasonable. I previously tended to be a perfectionist and to think in black-and-white terms. Maybe that's why I did well with principles of accounting! Living by Bible principles has definitely helped me to be more balanced. I'm now much happier, and my family is happier too. We also enjoy sharing the Bible's practical wisdom with others. Studying the Bible was the best “investment” I ever made. ■



THE EARTH

What is God's purpose for the earth?

"This is what Jehovah says, . . . the One who formed the earth, . . . who did not create it simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited."—Isaiah 45:18.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Many assert that the earth came about through a mindless process. Some religions teach that the earth is a temporary testing ground where God examines people to see if they should be rewarded with heavenly life or condemned to a fiery hell.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS The Bible says that "God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) He told the first human pair: "Be fruitful and become many, fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection . . . every living creature that is moving on the earth." (Genesis 1:28) The only mention of death was in connection with disobedience. (Genesis 2:17) Thus, God meant for the earth to be the eternal home for mankind. It was to be filled with obedient humans who would care for it and live forever on it.



Will the earth be destroyed?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Scientists have proposed various scenarios by which the earth could be destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Sometimes called existential risks, these include natural disasters—such as asteroid or comet impact, supervolcanoes, the death of the sun, or global warming—and they also include man-made catastrophes—such as nuclear war or bioterrorism.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS God's purpose for the earth has not changed. God's Word clearly states: "The earth remains forever." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) Furthermore, it will be inhabited for all time: "The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it."—Psalm 37:29.

WHY DOES IT MATTER? Belief that the earth will eventually be destroyed has caused some to plunder its precious resources. It has caused others to lose hope for the future and to live only for today. This can lead to a life with little meaning or purpose. On the other hand, if we believe that we can live forever on earth, we are more likely to make decisions that will benefit us and our families—even in the distant future.

"He has established the earth on its foundations; it will not be moved from its place forever and ever."—Psalm 104:5.

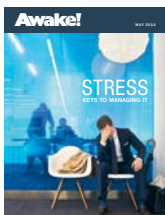
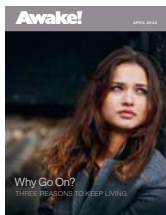
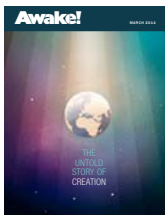
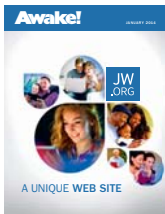
Is heaven mankind's final destination?

WHAT PEOPLE SAY Many believe that all good people go to heaven.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS Heaven belongs to God, but the earth is for man. The Bible speaks of "the inhabited earth to come." (Hebrews 2:5) Jesus was the first man to ascend to heaven, and the Bible shows that a select few others will go to heaven for a specific purpose. Alongside Jesus, they will "rule as kings over the earth."—Revelation 5:9, 10; Luke 12:32; John 3:13.

WHY DOES IT MATTER? The belief that all good people go to heaven is not compatible with what the Bible really teaches. If God were to take all good people to heaven, it would imply that he failed to accomplish his original purpose for the earth and that his promises regarding everlasting life on earth are not true. In contrast, God's Word promises: "Hope in Jehovah and follow his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth."—Psalm 37:34. ■

"As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men."—Psalm 115:16.



Subject Index for 2014 **Awake!**[®]

ANIMALS AND PLANTS

Airborne Gardeners (fruit bats), 10/14
Big Eyes—Tiny Body (tarsier), 12/14
“Observe Intently the Birds,” 8/14

ECONOMICS AND EMPLOYMENT

How to Control Spending, 6/14

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Burnout, 9/14
Diabetes—Reducing the Risk, 9/14
Gum Disease, 6/14
Mental Disorders, 12/14
Stress, 5/14

HISTORICAL FIGURES

Constantine, 2/14
Priestley, Joseph, 6/14
Whiston, William, 8/14

HUMAN RELATIONS

Disappointed With Marriage, 3/14
How Can People Make Peace? 8/14
How to Accept Correction, 4/14
How to Compromise, 12/14
How to Let Go of Resentment, 9/14
How to Resist Temptation, 10/14
How to Say No, 8/14
Resist Peer Pressure, 1/14
Teach Teens Internet Safety, 5/14
Teenage Daughter Is Stressed-Out, 2/14
Texting Manners, 7/14
What Makes a Good Friend? 6/14
When Your Child Lies, 11/14

INTERVIEWS

Biotechnologist (H. Kotlar), 2/14
Experimental Physicist (W. He), 7/14
Microbiologist (F. Yang), 1/14
Pharmaceutical Researcher (F. Dumoulin), 4/14
Professor of Financial Accounting (S. Taylor), 12/14
Surgeon (G. Perez), 5/14

JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

Found Hope When I Needed It Most (M. Aleksza), 11/14

LANDS AND PEOPLES

Belize, 10/14
Cambodia, 4/14

El Salvador, 3/14

Ireland, 7/14
Italy, 1/14
Roman Aqueducts, 11/14
Spain Expels the Moriscos, 9/14
“Stark and Powerful Symbol” (Hiroshima Peace Memorial), 11/14

MISCELLANEOUS

Invest Your Time Wisely, 2/14
Keys to Happy Life, 11/14
Tears, 3/14
True Success, 10/14
Unique Web Site (jw.org), 1/14
When Tragedy Strikes, 7/14
Why Go On? (suicide), 4/14
“Wisdom Is Calling Out,” 5/14
Witch Hunts, 5/14

RELIGION

Creation, 3/14

SCIENCE

Butterfly’s Wing, 4/14
Dung Beetle’s Navigation Skill, 6/14
Gastric Brooding Frog’s Reproductive System, 7/14
Horse’s Leg, 10/14
House Spider’s Sticky Secret, 1/14
Lantern of Photuris Firefly, 2/14
Light-Absorbing Butterfly Wing, 8/14
Locust’s Motion-Sensitive Neurons, 9/14
Snake Skin, 3/14

THE BIBLE’S VIEWPOINT

Cleanness, 11/14
Creation, 1/14
Death, 6/14
Dreams From God, 8/14
Earth, 12/14
Images, 10/14
Meditation, 5/14
Money, 3/14
Prayer, 9/14
Racism, 4/14
Religion, 7/14
Spiritism, 2/14

Did you miss one?

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