

The Point Of No Return

American's Collective Mental Health Crisis

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I recently ran across an article written last month for the Gallup polling website that discussed the results of one of their latest surveys measuring the emotional state of the world. Its opening paragraph read,

Nobody was alone in feeling more sad, angry, worried or stressed last year. Gallup's latest Negative Experience Index, which annually tracks these experiences worldwide in more than 100 countries and areas, shows that collectively, the world was feeling the worst it had in 15 years.

Of course, that sounded a bit obvious considering the mess that 2020 was. Between the COVID-19 crisis, transgender and racial strife, and the presidential election from hell, there was plenty of negative emotion for all humans to share.

But the survey's conclusion pointed out something I thought particularly noteworthy: "The pandemic is not entirely to blame for the world's emotional state. While 2020 may have been a record-setting year for negative emotions, the world has been on a negative trajectory for almost a decade."

That statement led me to dig a little deeper. I followed a few links and began searching for more material and, hopefully, a little insight into the mental health decline of our society, especially here in the US. Before long, I had quite a collection of articles, surveys, and opinion pieces that I picked out from hundreds and hundreds written within the last few years. I thought, to begin with, I would share a few of the headlines:

"2020 Sets Records for Negative Emotions"

"A National Mental Health Crisis"

The Point of No Return by Joseph B. Baity (<https://www.cgg.org>)

"The Deteriorating Mental Health of the US College Student"

"America's Mood Turns Dark as Optimism for the Future Plummets"

"Our World is in the Grip of a Mental Health Crisis"

"Why Are Kids Today More Prone to Mental Health Disorders?"

"8-Year-Olds in Despair: The Mental Health Crisis is Getting Younger"

"Is a Mental Health Crisis the Next Pandemic?"

And considering the final headline, I'll read the opening paragraph of the article written for it and posted on March 17 of this year on PsychologyToday.com:

Between the social isolation, economic instability, political turmoil, racial violence, death and sickness, and overall uncertainty about the future, it is no wonder that mental health in America is on the decline, that depression and anxiety levels are on the rise, and that the demand for mental health and addiction treatment is skyrocketing.

I think most of us are aware that America and the world are suffering from increased stress and have been for some time. What was surprising to me as I studied was the extent of the trouble, and how the crisis seems to be encompassing most every age group and demographic. It's hard to tackle such a difficult and complex issue like this in a 10 minute commentary, so I want to use the next few minutes to focus on some of the numbers.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, of the nearly 20 million students enrolled in colleges and universities in the fall of 2019, months before COVID, 60% suffered from mental health troubles, including anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse. Sixty percent!

A 2018 survey from the American College Health Association claimed that more than 40% of college students "felt so depressed they had difficulty

functioning.” The National Center for Biotechnology Information research indicates that nearly 1 in 5 college students have cut, burned, or bruised themselves intentionally. But this was the most shocking finding: According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the second-leading cause of death among college students is suicide. And it’s important to point out again that these numbers all date back to just before the COVID crisis began. I can only imagine what the updated numbers will reflect.

But let’s move onto some even more frightening facts about the mental health crisis among our younger children. These numbers come from Biomedical Health and News:

- 9.4 percent of kids between 2 and 17 years of age have received an ADHD diagnosis.
- 7.4 percent of kids aged 3 to 17 years have a diagnosed behavioral problem.
- 7.1 percent of kids aged 3 to 17 years have anxiety problems.
- 3.2 percent of kids aged 3 to 17 have diagnosed depression. (Other studies show that percentage to be as high as 5%)
- All in all, over 14%, or 1 in 7, American children, aged 2-8 (7.7 million children) had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder.

These numbers also predate the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which many doctors fear has and is still injuring our young children’s mental health more than any other age group. According to a *New York Times* article from July of this year, on one day this past May, at the Connecticut Children’s Hospital in Hartford, “10 of the 37 children in the emergency room for mental health reasons were under 13.” Not only is that remarkable that there would be so many under 13, but that there were 37 children in the emergency room for mental health reasons alone is frightening.

From the same article, we learn that the Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters in Virginia realized a “300% increase in mental health emergency department visits among 2 to 12-year-olds from 2015 to 2020.” I fear the worst is yet to come as statistics from our suicide prevention hotlines around the nation are indicating a troubling increase in calls from children under the age of 12.

As for adult Americans, I want to turn to the well-known and highly regarded “Stress in America” survey conducted by the American Psychological Association and the Harris Poll. In their 2020 poll, we learn, that

Nearly 2 in 3 adults say the current amount of uncertainty in our nation causes them stress. Further, 3 in 5 say the number of issues America faces currently is overwhelming to them. This finding speaks to the hardships many Americans may be confronting at this moment. Issues they are stressed about are not going away, they are piling up . . . Americans now also are more commonly worried about the long-term well-being of the country. More than 3 in 4 adults say the future of our nation is a significant source of stress . . . and more than 7 in 10 Americans say this is the lowest point in our nation's history that they can remember.

Folks, America is in trouble. From our youngest to our eldest, we are simply not as mentally tough or agile as we once were, back when the maxim “In God We Trust” reflected the sincere beliefs of most Americans. Our mental health quotient—the measure of our mental well-being—is deteriorating rapidly. We’ve lost our ability to deduce, to think on our feet, to arrive at proper conclusions, to handle all the various stresses and challenges, all the ups and the downs—that life sends our way. And here in 2021, it feels like we are about to snap.

Is there any wonder what we see happening all around us? Violent crime is up across the nation as inexplicable acts of cruelty and brutality fill the headlines each day, while many call for the defunding of their police. Drug and alcohol use are increasing at frightening proportions.

The tech giants report drastic increases in “screen time”—and profits—as we surf social media in the name of justice, virtue, and good will, while admitting we’re being manipulated. We know social media is designed to thrive on the proliferation and amplification of animosity and disorder.

The news becomes more puzzling every day, as our media no longer reports on the government, but for the government. What schools are teaching becomes more puzzling every day.

The most open-minded, inclusive nation in the history of mankind now calls itself racist, while criminals like George Floyd are venerated. His death was a crime, but so too was most of his life.

Boys want to be girls and girls want to be boys, while others haven't figured out which bathroom they should use, and we hold them up as heroes. And speaking of heroes, even our Olympic athletes are falling prey to mental stress.

Men can have babies, women can grow beards. Murdering babies is acceptable, but refusing a vaccine is not. Decision-makers struggle to make decisions that make sense. Carbon, meat, and oil are our enemies, while big pharma and electric cars are our friends. Our so-called leaders confuse and frustrate us with their contradictory ways, and their inability to understand why they were elected, or how to legislate any genuine cures for all that ails this nation—and then we re-elect them over and over again. And perhaps the greatest puzzle of all—the greatest sign of our declining mental health: Dr. Anthony Fauci, in spite of all his lies, u-turns, and missteps, still has a voice—still has a platform—in America.

Babylon, it seems, has lost her moorings and although she is not quite sure why, she is terrified. Terrified to be lost, but even more terrified to admit it. She is suffering from a collective madness that seems to be feeding upon itself and snowballing. Her own sins have wounded her beyond repair in this age. And like a wounded animal, she is frightfully dangerous to even the most well-intentioned efforts of any man to save her.

So we keep our distance. We come out of her with urgency, and we pray. We pray for our peace and salvation, but we also pray for Babylon, as we watch her painfully lurching in her final steps across the point of no return.