

Well Adjusted

Word Origin & History

well-adjusted:

1735, in ref. to mechanisms, etc., from well (adv.) + pp. of adjust.

In ref. to emotional balance, recorded from 1959.

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Well, I'm doing as well as can be expected. Thanks for asking.

I hadn't known that I had a syndrome or disorder or even a condition until I was given a Mental Health Evaluation at work.

In fact, I thought I was just fine. In fact, everyone at work seemed to be doing just fine. When asked how they were, they would almost always answer that they were, "fine." But, someone in management went to one of those organic business seminar which suggested that the best model for a successful business was one where the employees felt fulfilled and empowered. Fine wasn't good enough.

Those seminars are really great, actually. I've been to several. They're usually at some great location, with fantastic accommodations and really good food.

Management organizes these seminars and workshops because not only do they look good on a resume, the company invariably picks up the tab. But as long as I've been around, no one's ever tried to implement the seminars' programs. Let's face it, the reasons these workshops are successful has nothing to with their untested, off-the-cuff

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theories dreamed up over beers and wings. Those are just a cover for a company-paid outing. Unfortunately, no one explained this to Mary Dirth. But it's not her fault. She went to college on a cheerleading scholarship.

'How Wellness Management Will Enliven the Work Environment' was her first seminar. She came back really enthused. Her enthusiasm grew exponentially to the resistance at the office. Everyone shot her down. But, it's really hard to say no to a former cheerleader. It's almost impossible, actually. They never know when to give up. I heard her college's team had placed last in their division. She was inoculated for rejection. Eventually, we all decided it would be easier to let her have her little experiment and get it over with. She'd find out the hard way.

I'm not blaming her. I mean it's as much my fault as hers. As I mentioned, I thought I was just fine - my life was fine, everything was just fine - before the Wellness Evaluation. It seems I was mistaken. And the truth is, that nice psychologist nearly missed it herself. Actually, I shouldn't have called her a psychologist. They don't like that term. It's too clinical. They prefer "wellness expert" or "life coach." Sorry, my mistake.

In fact, I was already halfway out the door before the wellness expert started to suspect I might be secretly suffering from some kind of psycho-social challenge.

After the evaluation, on my way out, I asked her how I had done. She declared that I was 'well-adjusted.' That's when the trouble began.

"Well-adjusted for what?" I asked.

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She looked up from her desk with that expression people get when they discover, after nearly completing a 5000 piece puzzle, that one of the pieces, in fact the central piece, was missing. "Excuse me?" she asked.

A voice in the back of my skull told me to just shrug, shake my head and say, "Oh, right, 'well-adjusted,' as if I knew what she was talking about. That little voice is almost always right, and most of the time, I listen to it. This wasn't one of those times.

You see there was this other voice, the one that's always causing trouble. It felt it needed to explain exactly what I meant by my question. My mistake, I listened to that voice.

I mean really what kind of a diagnosis is that anyway: 'well-adjusted.' 'Well-adjusted' sounds like something for a machine to make it work more efficiently. In fact, it definitely sounded like a term for making something fit into an environment to which it didn't really, naturally, belong. So, it kind of begs the question: Well-adjusted for what?

It looked like her lunch was beginning to disagree with her. In fact, now she recognized that, not only was one of the puzzle pieces missing, half of them weren't really part of this particular puzzle at all. Someone had deliberately sabotaged the contents of the box in order to confuse her. "Excuse me?" she said.

Every fiber of my being screamed to just shake my head and offer her a, 'Never mind,' and get out of there as quick as possible. And, I would have too. In fact, I can't for the life of me tell you why I didn't. It was like one of those moments when you see yourself falling, and you know if you just move your foot, or place a hand in

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the right spot, you can catch yourself, but you don't. Instead you just watch yourself fall over the cliff and tumble to the bottom of the pit.

"I was just wondering," I said, "When you said I was well-adjusted, what it was that I was well-adjusted for?"

You can only say excuse me so many times. It's a hard and fast rule of our biological make-up. The brain has an automatic emergency braking system that limits how often a person can ask for clarification before he simply nods and smiles, as if he really heard and understood what the other person said. So, she didn't say, "Excuse me."

Unfortunately, she didn't just nod and smile either. She wasn't trained as a Freudian Psychologist. She took her position seriously. So, instead, she tried to offer some semblance of an answer. It was a good attempt actually, but in reality, it only made things worse.

"Well, life," she offered.

I got to tell you. That didn't help me at all. Has life become so unnatural that we need to be adjusted to function properly in it? In fact, it would appear so. It also would appear that she, the Wellness Expert, no longer held by her earlier diagnosis. She didn't think that I was balanced at all.

It turns out I suffer from Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. You may not have heard about it. It's only been recently discovered. I think I might be the first person every diagnosed.

Basically, it's a condition where I keep expecting something bad to happen – the other shoe to fall, so to speak – but it never does. Not only that, in fact, I'm not even

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aware that I'm expecting something bad to happen. I'm blissfully unaware that I'm anxious about something that hasn't happened yet. So, the more nothing ever happens, the more anxious and stressed out I potentially get, without any outward manifestation of my potential anxiety.

The scary thing about this condition is that for those of us that have it, there's absolutely no indication that we are so potentially stressed out. We actually seem, for all intents and purpose, as if we are actually well-adjusted. It might be the mental health equivalent of those "silent killer" diseases like diabetes.

In fact, you would think that just being diagnosed with such a horrible condition would cause it to metamorphous into actual real stress. But, unfortunately that didn't happen with me. I'm still pretty much afflicted, and to my great potential distress, completely unaware of it.

It seemed to me that the worst thing that could have done was to admit me to the hospital. In fact, there's no stress in here at all. It's really quite peaceful. To me, that's counter-productive to me. I tried to explain to them that if a major part of my condition is the non-actualization of the potential of being anxious, then being in a stress-free environment was probably delaying any chance I might have of a recovery. But there's no arguing with experts. They said my logic only pointed to a more acute form of the syndrome and this only proved how important it was that I remain under observation.

So that's where I am: Under observation and doing as well as can be expected. Unfortunately, I feel just fine.