



CONQUERING FEAR OF CONTAMINATION

By Ruth H – Brighton, Michigan

Ruth has had ample opportunity to prove that she has conquered her morbid fear of germs. She has recently returned to a job as waitress, after an absence of five years.

When Ruth first came to Recovery her viewpoint was that anyone who even stepped into her home was “contaminated” and anything that the person touched would have to be scrubbed and disinfected before Ruth would feel comfortable again. For Ruth to venture outside of the house was next to impossible. When even door knobs, water faucets, etc. had to be handled only with the protection of Kleenex, how was it possible to go to stores or to the post office or even handle the children after they had been outside to play? Consequently, not only Ruth, but also her two children were virtually prisoners in their own home. The children were constantly warned not to touch dozens of objects and life was practically suspended.

But Ruth took to Recovery with a will. She refused to miss a meeting; she read, studied and practiced. Now, after a few months of training, Ruth is back at work in a restaurant. Her fear of germs is gone. She has learned in Recovery (1) that other patients in that group have conquered similar obsessions, (2) that her horror of being “contaminated” or “contaminating” others were nothing but frightening sensations. And she practiced the Recovery slogan of: *Sensations are distressing but not dangerous*, (3) that muscles can be commanded to do what one fears to do. She has learned that she can handle both fearful and angry temper. (The job of being a waitress provides many opportunities for a nervous patient to be both fearful and angry.)

Recently, when Ruth was forced to make an unexpected trip to Detroit, she rode the bus, street cars, and taxis. She confessed that she did feel some discomfort because these conveyances had been her worse source of fear, being liable to “contamination” by every passenger. But she never at any time doubted that her muscles would carry her through. Ruth is a beautiful example of what Recovery can do if one has a firm determination to get well.

Dr. Low’s Comment: Ruth’s example is little short of inspiring. What she suffered from and described so expertly was one of those obsessions which causes patients to have a horror of dirt, germs, poisons or anything that can “contaminate” them or others. Let me state that these obsessions are of the most difficult in point of treatment. If I mention that I have never been able to effect a cure or even a noticeable improvement of this condition through office treatment alone, and that in Recovery I have been able to cure dozens of these helpless sufferers, you will realize that it is precisely these frightful obsessions that prove how efficient are our group techniques.

Reprinted from Selections of Dr. Low’s Works – Volume 2

