

## IV

### *Rules of the Transmission Line*

You have seen how the volume and pattern of energy determine and are determined by the stimuli and foci of attention. You have also learned the chief disturbers of straight-line energy transmission.

The rules of attention must vary with each situation. Hence you must be your own disciplinarian and teacher. You must also evolve your own best methods in learning the first essential, the development of well-organized habits.

No matter what the situation, however, you must be able as far as possible to start and stop energies when needful. Your energy channels are built so that the flow of power is from the environment to the brain *via* the sense organs, thence to the endocrines and muscles. So the following principles appear in the starting and stopping of your energies, hence in each act of attending or failing to attend.

Each person has his own peculiar motivations. You must discover what gets you under way best so that, when necessary, you may

press your own buttons. Here are the most general rules:

### STARTING YOUR ENERGIES

The most wholesome and natural starter for energy flows is something outside of you, whether it be something that you see or hear or smell or fear or wonder about or what not. Your environment is the natural object toward which you direct your energies, whether it be in the simple acts of getting food, air, and drink, or in such complex activities as getting people to vote the Democratic ticket. Thus your most effective energy stimulus is some phase of your environment which causes you to set up new adjustments.

Some people are stimulated well by the presence of others. Many cannot work at all unless alone.

### *Solitaires and Group-Workers*

Find out, early in life if possible, whether you tap your energies better in the presence of other people or better alone. Having discovered yourself thus, arrange all your study, work and play accordingly. Few people are neither stimulated nor inhibited by innocent bystanders, and still fewer by spectators or listeners who try to help or to hinder their activities. The rest of us fall into two opposed classes, more or less pronouncedly. One man

plays the piano divinely when alone but cannot stumble through the simplest tune before admiring friends. Another is indifferent and even sloppy when alone at the keys, but brightens and sparkles if somebody asks for a melody. The two tendencies seem to be less marked in simple muscular activities and much more so in mental. That is, people are not greatly better or worse when walking or running or lifting weights in the presence of others; but they are greatly affected if they have to recite lessons or speak pieces or perform calculations before an audience.

Test yourself repeatedly with each type of work from the crudest up to the most difficult intellectual sort. Then scheme to use your energies under whichever set of conditions prove best. You may find that you do heavy muscular work best in a group but think and learn intellectual matters best alone. Or you may do everything better when alone—or quite the reverse.

If you incline to be anti-social, you will probably discover that you get your best results when working alone, especially when thinking and writing. If your mind works slowly and your energy fund is normal, you will accomplish most in group activity, not alone.

#### *Working under Orders*

It is one thing to use your energies as you like, and quite another thing to allow some-

body else to turn them off and on as he likes. The man who is his own boss seldom encounters the difficulties into which the hireling runs every day of his life. Tapping one's energies is much simpler than having them tapped to order. This brings us to the toughest problem of the modern factory system. We cannot solve it here; it drags us into a thousand byways and snarls us up in all kinds of psychological puzzles. But a few fundamental facts and principles must be lined up for your inspection.

One of the ablest students of shop efficiency methods remarked, after two and one-half years of investigation, that he did not even hit upon the key question of his inquiry until the latter had been ended. He had been recording the rate at which some 40,000 employees worked, wearied, grew more or less efficient, developed boredom and day dreaming, and in general shifted their attitudes toward their jobs. When the task was finished, the specialist learned that he ought to have concentrated on quite another question, namely as to the effects which right and wrong methods of supervision have on the workers' effectiveness and morale. Coming at the problem afresh, he quickly learned that the worker's attitude toward his job, his boss and his own domestic conditions influence his output, as to quantity and quality, more than any other single factor. Except where home affairs are a

ness, the worker's attitude toward his immediate supervisor is most influential. His attitude toward the job itself is distinctly less important.

The boss who tries to get the most out of his gang by setting a stiff pace and by bawling out the slow workers ends up with an output far below that of the boss who cheerfully explains to each worker in his gang just what the job is, how each person can get the most done by resting often and relaxing and practising the easiest ways of doing the job. Companies intent upon cheap production must learn this lesson soon—or perish. Satisfied workers are better workers. Better workers leave jobs less often, so that labor turn-over drops, thereby reducing shop costs greatly. I believe that, as the huge, unwieldy corporations of the past quarter-century slowly disintegrate during the next decade, the smaller businesses that will take their places will find it much easier to handle workers like human beings, simply by virtue of the personal contacts facilitated by smallness.

While the necessity of working under orders which are only half understood and often given in an obnoxious manner continues, the wise worker will make the best of a bad situation by pursuing two general policies. First, he will so plan his activities off the job that they yield him the greatest possible satisfaction. Secondly, he will practise a special form of relaxation on the job with the single

purpose of becoming either indifferent to its unpleasant features or compliant toward the job so that he learns as much as possible about it without trying to dominate either situation or his immediate superior. Just how to perform these tasks depends upon the job and the shop. So we cannot go into further details here.

### *Be Your Own Self-Starter*

If everything in the way of an environmental stimulus is lacking, try to start your energies at the next step—the brain. Build up thoughts and attitudes which touch off your endocrine centers and your muscles. To do this, you must have a plan of action. Obviously, you can't get under way if nothing in the environment moves you and if your brain as well fails to stimulate you.

Nobody can help you here. The best we can do is to show you a few ways of eliminating vagueness and indecision that block the flow of energy and hence confuse your thinking and attitudes.

After getting into the clear as to how you wish to use your energies, work out the details.

But, say you, I can't do this. Well, let us see if there are not a few tricks of compelling yourself. Here are three which many people have tried with good results. One man writes out his resolutions and posts them where he cannot fail to read them every few hours. An-

other man goes further; he tells his friends what he is going to do and just when. He repeatedly talks about his plan thus, so that his friends come to expect performance on schedule. Thus he is shamed into following through. A third man goes the limit. He enters into solemn commitments with people. They expect and demand performance. This stimulates him enormously. He has, in a sense, surrendered his own weak will to the will of others.

This last method is the surest. It may be used with variations. Suppose, for instance, that you truly wish to develop yourself as a public speaker, but find yourself distracted by other interests. Take steps to deliver public speeches. Once you have been scheduled to appear, you find it hard to back out; and the pledge acts as a sharp spur.

If thoughts and attitudes fail to stimulate you, as a third best bet (and a much poorer one), try exciting your emotions, such as your fear of your losing your job, if you don't get to work on time.

I do not want you to infer from this that it is possible to develop energies merely by the act of taking an attitude of full-fledged, red-hot emotions. Nor is this necessary. The only important thing is to get something started which, being antagonistic to the previous trend in other muscles, establishes an energy flow. A tiny irritation can, if properly nursed, break down a much greater urge.

### STOPPING YOUR ENERGIES

To stop your energies and check useless attention, follow the same rules in reverse.

First, cut out from your environment whatever stimulates you. Sometimes you may have to flee the environment. At other times you may be able to stay in it, but merely cut out some part of it. If your office desk is beside an open window through which disturbing street noises pour, close the window.

If people disturb you, and your job demands close association with them even though they interfere with your attention and economy of energy, hire a secretary to guard you against all but the most necessary personal contacts. Schedule all appointments. Or lock the door against people except those you expect if you have no middleman. As a rule, people of low energy must barricade themselves thus from all but the most imperative engagements, for they gain in effective work what they lose in informal good will.

If you cannot escape from outside disturbances, try to work on the next stage in the cycle—namely, your brain. You do this in the first instance by shifting attention away from the undesired influences from without toward certain thoughts, interests and plans. I have often had to work in a noisy room while writing articles. Merely by drilling myself to attend to ideas connected with the articles, I have



usually escaped from outside sounds and sights.

If you have difficulty here, train yourself somewhat as follows. Force yourself to do hard mental work under the most unfavorable conditions. Above all, work as hard and as fast as you can. Learn to study, read, and reflect on your work while many distractions nag. Work for an hour or two each day in rooms where other people talk, a radio or phonograph plays, children chatter, and chaos reigns. This is difficult, I know. But keep at it until it becomes fairly easy. This is mostly a matter of muscular skill. Eliminate all unrelated actions, such as raising the eyes, cocking the head toward an encroaching noise, and so on. When you have finally mastered this art,\* reverse your procedure. Then work in the best possible surroundings, undisturbed and quiet.

Check every impulse to attend to your own inner state while dealing with a practical task. Keep your eye on the ball. Keep your mind on the next movement, whether the latter be of your hand or of your reasoning. Alternate action and rest so that as many muscles as possible are relaxed at each interval between efforts. Do not misuse the rest intervals in introspection and reverie.

The least effective procedure is again indicated when you find it impossible to cut off undesired outside disturbances. This third

\* For a fuller discussion, see "The Art of Learning" and "The Art of Rapid Reading."

method is to start up the proper emotion for stopping the activity. It is peculiarly difficult because it is in the nature of an emotion itself to induce activity. The method becomes possible only by virtue of the circumstance that antagonistic activities are mutually exclusive. You often wish not to stop all action but merely to stop certain lines of action. Then discover which types of emotions will so interfere with the undesirable lines of action as to inhibit them. This is perhaps a little confusing at first thought. But see how it operates in escaping boredom, again. You shift your inner attitude toward the bore or toward the situation that becomes boresome. Sometimes this becomes possible by a change of attitude and emotions such as shifting from the masterful emotion aroused by trying to argue some stupid question with a bore to the attitude of curiosity, in which the bore simply becomes another bug under the microscope which you intend to study. Now your tensions are completely changed, though, to be sure, just as many muscles are involved, numerically speaking, in the development of curiosity as in the aggressive act of trying to beat down the bore's arguments.