

THE ELEANOR AND ANNA ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

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Description: In this segment, ER interviews Brooks Mendell about his veteran rehabilitation program, "I-Do."

Participants: ER, Brooks Mendell

[ER:] Thank you, Anna. I should like to introduce today a gentleman who is involved, heart and soul, in a new kind of work, a most unusual kind. His name is Brooks Mendell and he's raised the art of self-defense to something of a science and has besides put it to new and valuable uses. Mr. Mendell is using the unique system which he's worked out to help in the rehabilitation of veterans. We should like to have you tell us all about that, Mr. Mendell, but first tell us about your new system called "I-Do".

[Brooks Mendell:] "I-Do" was formulated after a trial and error experience of about twenty-seven years. I was fortunate enough to have your pleasure and guidance during the war, when I visited you at the White House and you helped me meet some of the top officials in the Army, and through that I evolved a system called "Protect Yourself", which I taught the teachers of the Armed Forces. I also wrote the book, at the suggestion of some of the armed officials, and uh that is being sent out at the present time for the third time all over the world. The "I-Do" came from a synthesis of all sports that have to do with dynamics of motion and I evolved this through actual participation in sports with the men in the Armed Forces and various people throughout my whole life. (1:24)

[ER:] That sounds most interesting! I wish you could give us a demonstration of it, [Brooks Mendell: Mhm.] but I realize that isn't possible. But, I'd like to know how you came to call it "I-Do".

[Brooks Mendell:] Well, uh, the "I-Do" came from Freud's id--I-D--he said that all the unconscious drives that we have are formulated in the libido, we know nothing about them other than that they do motivate us. Now, from that stage we go into the ego stage and I thought if I could take some of the unconscious drives and make it known to us, we would do something about unraveling some of these unconscious drives which get us into trouble: our own hates, our own frustrations. Now, further than that, as we go into the ego stage, we find that we do things for ourselves. Now that is the stage I think that Hitler brought to the highest point of development. However there is another stage where we go to the superego stage and I think you represent that yourself, Mrs. Roosevelt, in terms of activity for other people, where we do things that help other people and incidentally will help us indirectly.

[ER:] That's very interesting. So, the psychological element enters into this. How did you happen to develop it, I mean did some particular thing bring it to your mind and make you start developing it?

[Brooks Mendell:] Well, as a youngster I was quite usual, and small, and always wanted to travel around with the older boys, be one of the gang and I found that in order to do that I had to take a lot of beatings and I didn't like to take beatings, as mostly the boys don't like to do, so I had to learn various ways of protecting myself, and as I learned how to protect myself I found that there was a need to gain an outlet for these frustrations which we have, and as we gain an outlet for these frustrations, I've found that the best way to do it was through work itself and then through play. I think they both are very essential in getting rid of these hostilities, the-these hates and feelings of inferiority. (3:24)

[ER:] I'm sure it must be gratifying to you that can put it to such a worthwhile use. Just how do you apply "I-Do" in rehabilitating wounded veterans and, I understand, other handicapped persons.

[Brooks Mendell:] Well, I was most fortunate in meeting several top officials in medicine in the Army and they gave me an opportunity to work out these theories in the hospitals. I think I can tell you specific incidents in uh in England general hospital, where I had a group of approximately two hundred and fifty men who--boys who had just come back from the wars, nothing had been done with them, they had just been operated on and they were sitting in the--in this hospital room and I would come in and say, pointing to a boy who had lost his right arm, "You-you-you hate me," and he looked at me and said, "What do you mean? I don't understand what you mean." Well, to make it short, the fact that he had lost his one arm made him feel inferior and he saw the fact that I had two arms, that made him realize that I was not an individual who had a shortcoming, but that he had the shortcoming, then I showed him how to compensate, I showed him how to use his left hand. He happened to be a pitcher-- lost his vocation when he lost his arm and consequently he learned to use his left hand. We only use approximately ten percent of our body anyhow and what I try to do is unlock this hidden power, which gives us an opportunity to use this hate and this other thing which keeps us paralyzed, free that for activity which is constructive.

[ER:] Well, you must be able to do a good deal for the polio--for the virus diseases too.

[Brooks Mendell:] Yes, I have worked in that, in fact, I've had my best results there because a person who was handicapped, and I don't like the word "handicap" because it's a negative word, I think every one of us are handicapped, we do have a shortcoming, and if we could do away with that word "handicap", I think it would be good.

[ER:] I think it's fortunate that we have men and women who take such an interest in this subject because it's due to such interests that science finally controls or conquers these diseases. Thank you, Brooks Mendell, for being our guest today, and now back to my daughter, Anna, in Hollywood.

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