

---

# If you're 120

*Tom Dening*

---

## If you're 120

You've lived for almost 44 000 days  
 Through 30 leap years  
 You could have blown out 7 000 birthday  
 candles  
 You'd have been in middle age by World War I  
 You could have known folk who remembered  
 Waterloo  
 You might well think de Gaulle was still in  
 charge  
 In your lifetime cars, computers, tumble dryers  
 came

## If you're 120

There wouldn't be any schoolfriends left  
 Your grandchildren could be 80 plus  
 They might die of old age first

You'd be rather small by now  
 Nor see too well, nor hear  
 Need help with washing, dressing, maybe feeding  
 By vital village girls of six generations on

## If you're 120

You might not bother thinking much  
 You wouldn't need to plan  
 Sit and smile secretly, instead  
 You couldn't buy a house, insurance, holidays  
 You don't run, cook, make love any more  
 They spoil you rotten and make a birthday fuss  
 Nobody's been this old before.

Tom Dening, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Fulbourn  
 Hospital, Cambridge CB1 5EF*

---

 WISDOM FOR PSYCHIATRISTS

# Only one patient

*Larry Culliford*

---

## There is only one patient: oneself.

Look at them before you, one at a time. Do not  
 two eyes, nose, mouth, ears mirror your own?  
 This patient – this person – is endowed like you  
 with vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch. Also  
 feelings: sorrow and joy; anxiety, peacefulness;  
 anger, guilt, shame, bewilderment, equanimity.  
 Is this not so?  
 "But thoughts, words, deeds: these are differ-  
 ent", you say.  
 Do not words and deeds begin with and depend  
 upon our thoughts?  
 When did you last, in meditation, watch your  
 thoughts pass by uncensored? And have you

recently studied your dreams dispassionately,  
 without fear? Is there no imagination within  
 you? Are there any impulses to speech or action  
 you could perhaps have forgotten?  
 Heart and mind: these do not so easily forget.  
 Everyone's blood is red. Everyone's tears are  
 salty. If you know even a little something about  
 empathy, you will know what I mean. And you  
 will have the gratitude of many.

Larry Culliford, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Brighton  
 Community Mental Health Centre, 79, Bucking-  
 ham Road, Brighton BN1 3RJ*