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mental, *adj.*¹ and *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'mɛntl/, U.S. /'mɛn(t)l/

Forms: LME **mentale**, LME- **mental**, 15-16 **mentall**, 16 **mentalle**.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from French. Partly a borrowing from Latin. **Etymons:** French *mental*; Latin *mentalis*.

Etymology: < Middle French, French *mental* (1371 as *mentel*, 1457 as *mental*) or its etymon post-classical Latin *mentalis* rational (beginning of the 5th cent.; rejected as a neologism by St Augustine) < classical Latin *ment-*, *mēns* mind (see I-MIND *n.*) + *-ālis* -AL *suffix*¹. Compare Italian *mentale* (a1306), Old Occitan *mental* (c1350), Spanish *mental* (1490), Portuguese *mental* (15th cent.).

A. *adj.*¹ (In all senses except A. 4 and A. 6 predominantly used *attrib.*)

I. Senses relating to the human mind in the most general sense.

1. Of or relating to the mind.

?c1422 T. HOCLEVE *Ars Sciendi Mori* 666 in *Minor Poems* (1892) I. 203 But now y see with myn yen
 mental Thestat of al an-othir world than this.

c1485 (†1456) G. HAY *Bk. Gouvernaunce of Princis* (1993) xxiii. 96 Fra all vexacioun corporale and
 mentale.

1589 G. PUTTENHAM *Arte Eng. Poesie* III. xxiii. 219 In like sort the mynde for the things that be his
 mentall obiectes hath his good graces and his bad.

1609 SHAKESPEARE *Troilus & Cressida* II. iii. 172 Twixt his mentall and his actiue parts, Kingdomd
 Achilles in commotion rages.

1667 MILTON *Paradise Lost* XI. 418 The inmost seat of mental sight.

1733 POPE *Ess. Man* (rev. ed.) I. 200 Far as Creation's ample Range extends, The Scale of sensual,
 mental pow'rs ascends.

1778 V. KNOX *Ess.* II. xxvi. 254 Mental food is also found..to..delight the longest, when it is not
 lusciously sweet.

1802 *Med. & Physical Jrnl.* 8 356 Avoid excess in eating, drinking, and in mental exertion.

a1820 T. BROWN *Lect. Philos. Human Mind* I. 240 We shall now proceed to observe..the mental
 phenomena.

1843 J. S. MILL *Syst. Logic* II. vi. iv. 506 These differences of mental susceptibility..may be
 consequences of the previous mental history of those individuals.

1879 W. JAMES *Coll. Ess. & Rev.* (1920) 139 Ever some vital factor of our mental life will rebel and
 refuse to be dragged the same way with the rest.

1890 W. JAMES *Princ. Psychol.* I. ii. 48 A most interesting effect of cortical disorder is *mental
 blindness*. This consists not so much in insensibility to optical impressions, as in *inability to
 understand them*.

1900 *Daily News* 1 Aug. 5/7 His mental state was inherited from long-past generations.

- 1916 L. M. TERMAN *Measur. of Intelligence* i. 6 The large majority of these belong to the moron grade; that is, their mental development will stop somewhere..between 9 and 12.
- 1921 B. RUSSELL *Anal. Mind* viii. 141 The sensation, as a mental event, will consist of awareness of the colour.
- 1932 *Mind* **41** 137 A man whose whole life had been devoted to thought, and whose intense mental energy came out all the more clearly as his bodily powers declined.
- 1949 R. G. SIMPSON *Fund. Educ. Psychol.* ii. 22 Growth of mental functions is not as easily traced as that of physical abilities, primarily because mental growth is composed of many characteristics.
- 1973 A. KENNY *Wittgenstein* viii. 142 When we hear a sentence in a language we know, there are mental events—feelings, images, etc.
- 1981 A. JUDD *Breed of Heroes* II. vi. 120 Either way, it was a mental as well as a physical burden.

2. Carried on or performed by the mind; taking place in the mind; formed in the mind. See also *mental arithmetic n.*, *mental reservation n.* at Special uses.

- ?a1425 tr. Catherine of Siena *Orcherd of Syon* (Harl.) (1966) 145 (MED) But first God schewip..how a soule schal come fro vocal preyer to mental preyer.
- 1526 W. BONDE *Pylgrimage of Perfection* III. sig. HHHiv^v To..use that maner of prayer, whether it be mentall or vocal, in the which he fyndeth most swetnesse.
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* I. iii. 8 By Consequence,..I understand that succession of one Thought to another, which is called..Mentall Discourse.
- 1651 T. HOBBS *Leviathan* IV. xlvi. 372 Those Ideas, or mentall Images we have of all things wee see, or remember.
- 1676 J. LOCKE *Jrnl.* 26 Aug. in *Ess. Law Nature* (1954) 278 The thing to be believed was a proper object of faith and not of sense, a mental proposition, viz. that the God of the three children was the true God.
- 1796 W. HERSCHEL in *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) **86** 173 σ Leonis..being marked by Flamsteed 4.5m, the star itself will in every respect pass for one of that magnitude, when compared to a mental standard taken from other stars of the same author.
- 1818 S. T. COLERIDGE *Friend* (new ed.) I. iv. 35 A lazy half-attention amounts to a mental yawn.
- 1832 D. BREWSTER *Lett. Nat. Magic* iii. 50 With persons of studious habits, who are much occupied with the operations of their own minds, the mental pictures are much more distinct.
- 1850 J. MCCOSH *Method Divine Govt.* (ed. 2) III. i. 292 The mental process..by which the distinction between vice and virtue is observed.
- 1865 J. S. MILL *Exam. Hamilton's Philos.* vi. 72 The belief is without understanding, for we form no mental picture of what we believe.
- 1880 W. JAMES *Coll. Ess. & Rev.* (1920) 161 This complex aggregate of afferent feelings..renders absolutely precise and distinctive our mental image of the exact strength of movement to be made.
- 1921 B. RUSSELL *Anal. Mind* vi. 109 'Introspection' is supposed to furnish data for knowledge of our mental processes.
- 1925 H. J. LASKI *Let.* 28 Apr. in *Holmes-Laski Lett.* (1953) I. iv. 735 Clearly, there is no adequacy in purely mental travel, despite the example of Kant.

- 1944 J. S. HUXLEY *On Living in Revol.* iv. 56 The deliberate 'mental operation' of psycho-analysis or other form of psychotherapy.
- 1949 G. RYLE *Concept of Mind* vii. 200 Stomach-aches..have physiological attachments which threaten to sully the purity of the brook of mental experiences.
- 1972 W. C. COE *Challenges Personal Adjustm.* iv. 76 Mental telepathy is the transfer of thought from one person to another without overt communication.
- 1983 G. LORD *Tooth & Claw* vi. 43 He had subjected her to a mental form of assault and battery.
- 1996 S. KING *Desperation* i. i. 11 Doing a rough mental calculation that used the roof of the car as a steering-point.

3. Of or relating to the mind as an object of study; concerned with the phenomena of the mind.

- 1815 J. B. SCOTT *Diary* 3 Aug. in E. Mann *Englishman at Home & Abroad* (1930) vii. 167 My main object was to gain practical knowledge of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and Mental Philosophy.
- a1820 T. BROWN *Lect. Philos. Human Mind* I. 8 There is, in short, a science that may be termed mental physiology.
- 1828 G. PAYNE (*title*) Elements of mental and moral science.
- 1831 T. C. UPHAM (*title*) Elements of mental philosophy.
- 1860 J. MARTINEAU *Ess. Philos. & Theol.* (1866) 1st Ser. I. 248 Mental Science is Self-knowledge.
- 1925 *Philos. Rev.* **34** 334 Dilthey held that for the mental sciences..the natural scientific method is insufficient.
- 1967 *Brit. Jرنل. Psychiatry* **113** 766/1 The other department of mental science was psychology, whose task it was to investigate objectively the causal and genetic background of mental phenomena.

4. Characterized by the possession of an active mind; thoughtful; intellectual. *rare*.

- 1840 B. E. HILL *Pinch—of Snuff* 96 Platonically enamoured of the beautiful, mental, and excellent wife to a very jealous moralist.
- 1983 J. JONES *Dostoevsky* ii. 202 This young man is also very mental. His being is riddled with theory and hypothesis.

II. Senses relating to the mind in an unhealthy or abnormal state.

5.

a. Designating a temporary or permanent impairment of the mind due to inherited defect, injury, illness, or environment, usually needing special care or rehabilitation. Esp. in **mental breakdown**, **mental deficiency**, **mental disease**, **mental disorder**, **mental incapacity**, **mental retardation**, etc.; see also *mental illness* *n.* at Special uses.

- 1768 A. TUCKER *Light of Nature Pursued* II. II. xxi. 47 Bringing on the inconveniences, disabilities, pains and mental disorders spoken of.
- 1791 W. COWPER tr. Homer *Iliad* in *Iliad & Odyssey* I. xxiv. 640 (*note*) Jupiter justifies him against Apollo's charge, affirming him to be free from those mental defects which chiefly betray men into sin.
- 1794 H. L. PIOZZI *Brit. Synonymy* II. 6 Phrenzy, madness and distraction are the poetical expressions of what we call mental derangement, or disordered spirits, in elegant conversation.
- 1812 T. JEFFERSON *Let. in Papers* (2008) Retirement Ser. V. 95 It would only change the topic of abuse with the former, and not cure the mental disease of the latter.
- 1838 *Biblical Repertory* Apr. 294 Large tumours have been found in the encephalon, which must have compressed the brain for years, without producing the least mental defect or aberration.
- 1839 E. A. POE *Fall House of Usher* in *Burton's Gentleman's Mag.* Sept. 150 And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend.
- 1847 C. BRONTË *Jane Eyre* III. i. 21 I resolved to be clean in my own sight—and to the last I repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched myself from connexion with her mental defects.
- 1856 *Educ. of Imbecile* (Home for Invalid & Imbecile Children, Edinburgh) 11 His appearance and bearing gave evidence of great mental deficiency.
- 1869 'G. ELIOT' *Let.* 21 Sept. (1956) V. 56 I have such a horror of a mental breakdown.
- 1904 *Lancet* 27 Aug. 598/2 Scientific views regarding mental disease have..been undergoing great changes.
- 1904 *Lancet* 17 Sept. 838/1 Those cases of mental incapacity arising from incipient or oncoming insanity.
- 1907 J. LONDON *Iron Heel* x. 166 Hints were made of mental breakdown on his part.
- 1908 *Rep. Royal Comm. Feeble Minded* VIII. 324 in *Parl. Papers* (Cd. 4202) XXXIX. 159 'Feeble minded', *i.e.*, persons who may be capable of earning a living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable from mental defect existing from birth or from an early age: (*a*) of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows; or (*b*) of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.
- 1908 *Lancet* 12 Sept. 812/2 It was difficult..to secure effective treatment for early undeveloped cases of mental disorder.
- 1913 *Act 3 & 4 George V* c. 28 (*title*) Mental deficiency act.
- 1914 W. B. DRUMMOND tr. A. Binet & T. Simon *Mentally Defective Children* ii. 16 Some heads of schools..have fixed to almost a year the mental retardation of the child as compared with normal children of the same age.
- 1921 C. L. BURT *Mental & Scholastic Tests* ii. 163 The central problem of this memorandum—the line of demarcation for mental deficiency.
- 1946 *Amer. Jrnl. Psychiatry* **103** 323/1 At the present time it cannot be said that we cure any of the more important and more fixed mental diseases.
- 1960 *Guardian* 16 Mar. 4/6 The most important change in terminology made by the new Act [*sc.* the Mental Health Act, 1959] is that the expressions 'mental deficiency' and 'mental defectives' should be abolished... 'Mental disorder' is introduced as a new term covering all forms of mental ill health.

- 1964 J. TIZARD *Community Services for Mentally Handicapped* I. ii. 18 There is a statutory obligation placed upon the local authorities in Britain to ascertain cases of mental subnormality..and to make provision for them.
- 1967 *Brit. Jرنل. Psychiatry* **113** 340/1 It is a relief to find that the old title 'Mental Deficiency' has been allowed to remain and has not been replaced by the much less accurate legal (in England) term 'Mental Subnormality'.
- 1970 'T. COE' *Wax Apple* (1973) vi. 50 I automatically *had* felt superior. After all, I'd never had a mental breakdown.
- 1971 *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg) 4 Sept. 2/1 Nothing he had heard in court suggested that Muller has ever had a mental disorder.
- 1989 C. CAUFIELD *Multiple Exposures* (1990) 247 Safeguards should be introduced to guard against the accidental irradiation of women in the early months of pregnancy when the foetus is particularly vulnerable to mental retardation.
- 1991 *Jرنل. Mental Deficiency Res.* **35** 195 The control patients had a wide variety of causes for mental deficiency.
- 1994 *Nature* 7 July 29/3 Mental retardation is a distressing fact of nature with which families, humanitarians and social policymakers must contend.

b. Designating a place where those with disorders of the mind are treated or confined. Esp. in ***mental home, mental institution, mental ward***, etc.; see also *mental hospital* *n.* at Special uses.

Now somewhat dated, and sometimes avoided as potentially offensive; *psychiatric* is often used instead.

- 1898 H. MORTEN *Compl. Syst. Nursing* 249 A year's training in a general hospital, and two years' training in a mental hospital, would be the proper scheme to turn out the best mental nurse.
- 1908 *Lancet* 26 Dec. 1943/1 (*heading*) Mental observation wards in Glasgow Parish Hospital.
- 1926 W. LEWIS *Art of being Ruled* XII. vii. 405 The goitrous torpid and squinting husks provided by Matisse in his sculpture are worthless except as tactful decorations for a mental home.
- 1932 R. KIPLING *Limits & Renewals* 151 They pushed him into a Mental Home, And that is like the grave.
- 1958 'N. SHUTE' *Rainbow & Rose* v. 182 He had three young children and disliked the thought of bringing them up in the surroundings of a mental home.
- 1970 'T. COE' *Wax Apple* (1973) ii. 17 The Midway was a haven for people recently out of mental institutions.
- 1974 N. FREELING *Dressing of Diamond* 74 We're looking at every affair..linked to mental homes, prison releases..psychopathic anything.
- 1983 *Listener* 10 Feb. 27/1 He drew..cowering men at the mercy of big, entirely Thurberian bully-women with mental-institution haircuts.
- 1991 S. FALUDI *Backlash* II. iv. 98 The press condemned them [*sc.* single women] to the mental ward once more for the duration of the Depression.
- 1993 *Harper's Mag.* Sept. 32/2 Trevor got the sack the same day he was allocated a place in the mental home.

c. Designating a person specializing in the treatment or care of individuals with disorders of the mind. Esp. in **mental nurse**.

- 1898 H. MORTEN *Compl. Syst. Nursing* 249 A year's training in a general hospital, and two years' training in a mental hospital, would be the proper scheme to turn out the best mental nurse.
- 1922 *Lancet* 5 Aug. 290/1 The two duties of mental nurses.
- 1932 *Daily Tel.* 25 Apr. 9/3 Dr. Caton, the eminent mental specialist,...has completed his findings of the state of Lt. Massie's mind at the time.
- 1996 *Independent* 16 Jan. 8/1 In a small office in the Gordon psychiatric hospital, in central London, sits..a registered mental nurse.

d. Designating a person suffering from an illness or impairment of the mind. Esp. in **mental case, mental defective**.

A use now increasingly avoided.

- 1899 *Appletons' Pop. Sci. Monthly* Apr. 747 (title) Mental defectives and social welfare.
- 1904 *Lancet* 17 Sept. 838/1 The Home Secretary..has at last been impressed with the total inadequacy of the provision made for..mental incapables.
- 1908 *Lancet* 12 Sept. 813/2 Dr. W. C. S. Clapham..had many suspected mental cases sent to his out-patient department.
- 1913 E. MEYNELL *Life F. Thompson* 279 Many a time I've asked him to have his bit of lunch with me and the other 'mental'—O yes, she's a mental case, as I may have told you.
- 1922 *Edinb. Rev.* July 34 The Eugenics Education Society..actively supported the Act for the compulsory segregation of mental defectives.
- 1944 H. G. WELLS '42 to '44 182 The highly bred dogs are mostly physical and mental defectives.
- 1967 *Canad. Med. Assoc. Jnl.* 97 808/1 He distrusted psychiatrists, fearing that his physical condition would be forgotten and that he would be labelled a 'mental case'.
- 1992 *Times Lit. Suppl.* 11 Dec. 18/2 I had always thought of him as less a mental defective than an amiable simpleton whose huge hands just need keeping an eye on.

6. colloq.

a. Mentally ill; mentally handicapped. Also in weakened sense: irrational, uncontrolled, eccentric, crazy.

- 1927 D. L. SAYERS *Unnatural Death* iv. 41 I gather she was a little queer towards the end—a bit mental, I think you people [sc. nurses] call it?
- 1959 S. GIBBONS *Pink Front Door* iv. 48 They had the same round eyes, only his hadn't got that almost mental look.
- 1963 J. DIDION *Run, River* xi. 111 Elizabeth was practically mental about jazz musicians.
- 1974 N. FREELING *Dressing of Diamond* 65 There's somebody mental floating about.
- 1987 *News on Sunday* 19 July 3/6 There was a conspiracy to get rid of him, the feller was mental.

b. to go mental: to become mentally unbalanced; (later chiefly) to lose one's self-control, give way to overwhelming emotion (frequently in negative contexts, but more recently (as in quot. 1992) also in positive sense of ecstatic abandon).

- 1930 J. B. PRIESTLEY *Angel Pavement* ii. 68 I don't care if Mr. Dersingham goes mental, we're going to be lucky.
- 1958 'N. SHUTE' *Rainbow & Rose* iv. 151 Everybody goes a bit mental in a war.
- 1990 *Catch* Feb. 27/2 I went really mental at her and accused her of lying.
- 1992 *Village Voice* (N.Y.) 28 Jan. 49/1 (adv.) Take the express train and go mental to the sounds of DJ Steve McMahon.
- 1995 N. BLINCOE *Acid Casuals* iv. 25 Now, if anyone passes out from the heat or drink, anything, the bouncers go mental.
- 1998 A. WARNER *Sopranos* 48 It's gonna be brilliant Michelle, we're just gonna go mental.

B. n.

†1.

a. In sing. and pl. Intellectual faculties. Obs.

- 1676 *Philos. Trans.* (Royal Soc.) 11 554 The intrinsick mentals or intellectuals of Mankind.
- a1763 J. BYROM *Misc. Poems* (1773) I. 200 One sees how corpuscular Eating, and Drinking, Make Youth, in its Mentals, so stout, and unthinking.

b. In pl. Mental reservations. Obs. nonce-use.

- 1712 J. ARBUTHNOT *Lewis Baboon* IV. iv. 21 Hast thou laid aside all thy Equivocals and Mentals in this case?

2. With the. That which relates to the mind; the domain of the mind.

- 1874 A. H. SAYCE *Princ. Compar. Philol.* vii. 263 The analysis of the material is not the same as the analysis of the mental.
- 1930 H. M. FOSTON *Man & Image of God* vii. 120 The chasm between the mental and the apparently non-mental.
- 1989 P. MCCABE *Carn* vi. 95 Maisie Lynch is her name. Half daft but there's no harm in her. Divides her time between here and the mental.
- 1991 *Mind* 100 135 The physical excludes the mental, according to the supervenience physicalist.

3. colloq. A person who is mentally ill; a psychiatric patient.

- 1913 E. MEYNELL *Life F. Thompson* 279 Many a time I've asked him to have his bit of lunch with me

and the other 'mental'—O yes, she's a mental case, as I may have told you.

1937 E. PARTRIDGE *Dict. Slang* 517/1 *Mental*, a person mentally deranged, mad.

1973 F. DE FELITTA *Oktoberfest* (1974) xiv. 162 'What's to prevent him from going?' 'He is a mental.'

1984 D. DELILLO *White Noise* (1985) III. xxxiii. 254 *Mentals* are unpredictable because they don't know themselves what they're doing.

SPECIAL USES

mental age *n.* [probably after French *la maturité d'intelligence* or *l'âge d'intelligence* (respectively 1908 and 1909 in the usage of A. Binet and T. Simon)] the degree of mental development of a person, expressed as the age at which a similar degree of development is attained by an average person.

1910 *Pedagogical Seminary* 17 392 In order to get some accurate idea as to what *mental age* meant in the training of these children, we had to cut out all of those who were beyond the training period.

1937 'M. INNES' *Hamlet, Revenge!* III. iii. 259 His *mental age's* about eight.

1990 *Times Educ. Suppl.* 1 June B14/5 Tanya is 19 years of age but since the accident she's suffered from brain damage and now has the *mental age* of a child of eight years old.

mental arithmetic *n.* arithmetic performed entirely in the head, without recourse to written figures or calculating aids.

1766 H. BROOKE *Fool of Quality* I. vii. 260 I cast up, in a pleasing kind of *mental arithmetic*, how much my weekly twenty guineas would amount to at the year's end.

1838 *Jrnl. Statist. Soc.* 1 307 Reading, writing on slates, and *mental arithmetic*, are taught in classes, with moral duties, and the Scriptures.

1889 W. C. BROWNELL *French Traits* iii. 98 The French intelligence seems to have almost no frivolous side. The different varieties of *mental arithmetic*, guessing-games, puzzles, puns, spiritualism, theosophy, fanaticisms, have no attractions for it.

1935 C. L. BURT *Subnormal Mind* i. 41 The reading test and the *mental arithmetic test*..will yield a fair estimate of the child's educational level.

1990 *Times Educ. Suppl.* 5 Oct. (Review section) 20 Does a reliance on mathematical aids mean *mental arithmetic* suffers?

mental block *n.* *Psychol.* an inability to recall something or to perform a particular mental process.

1939 B. M. MARTINSON in *Jrnl. Exper. Psychol.* 24 143 In a long series of experiments he [sc. A. Bills] developed the theory of '*mental blocks*'.

- 1945 *Jrnl. Higher Educ.* **16** 228 A mental block or a profound temperamental idiosyncrasy precludes a student from the study of mathematics or French or Latin or Greek or something else.
- 1998 *Guardian* 24 Oct. (Travel section) 2/2 Liliana had a total mental block when it came to learning the name of the blue-footed booby.

mental blocking *n. Psychol.* = BLOCKING *n.* 1f.

- 1932 *Amer. Math. Monthly* **39** 376 The initial mental blocking that sometimes affects a student confronted with a new problem.
- 1935 A. G. BILLS in *Jrnl. Exper. Psychol.* **18** 172 The other study reports the discovery of the principle of mental blocking.
- 1990 *Independent Living* (Nexis) Feb. 85 Picking up the telephone, placing the ad, exposing ourselves—all these become monumental. With the mental blocking comes the fear.

mental chemistry *n. Psychol.* the psychological processes by which complex ideas, sensations, etc., are generated from simple ones (without being merely the sum of them), conceived of as analogous to certain chemical phenomena.

- 1843 J. S. MILL *Syst. Logic* II. VI. iv. 503 These therefore are cases of mental chemistry: in which it is proper to say that the simple ideas generate, rather than that they compose, the complex ones.
- 1890 W. JAMES *Princ. Psychol.* II. xx. 202 Discrimination, association, [etc.]..are quite capable of giving us all the space-perceptions we have so far studied, without the aid of any mysterious 'mental chemistry'.
- 1948 R. S. WOODWORTH *Contemp. Schools Psychol.* (ed. 2) iii. 44 This idea of a 'mental chemistry' reappeared from time to time in later psychological theories.
- 1990 *Sci. Amer.* Dec. 48/3 Their [sc. structuralists'] view has been described as 'mental chemistry' because it assumes that perceptions can be analyzed component by component, much as molecules can be broken down into atoms.

mental cruelty *n.* chiefly *Law* conduct which inflicts suffering on another person without involving physical assault, esp. (*U.S.*) as constituting grounds for legal separation or divorce.

- 1899 C. H. GAROUTTE in *Rep. Supreme Court Calif.* **122** 58 The cruelty relied upon to support the complaint is largely mental cruelty.
- 1928 *Harper's Mag.* July 159/1 The Nevada laws..necessitate a minimum of fraud... The judges demand very slight evidence to prove mental cruelty. A woman may obtain her freedom on the ground that her husband has..told her to go to hell once too often.
- 1967 R. S. MASTER *Elem. Psychiatry* xx. 398 The petitioner has to prove..that the spouse can differentiate between right and wrong and understand the nature of the mental cruelty.
- 1992 *Daily Express* 9 Sept. 9/5 Will they..release Kate the untamed shrew to drag Petrucchio through the divorce courts for mental cruelty?

mental eye *n.* one's imagination; frequently in *pl.* and in figurative context.

- 1661 O. FELLTHAM *Lusoria* 88 in *Resolves* (ed. 8) xvii The other were Visions, and not perspicable with corporal but mental eyes.
- 1702 C. BEAUMONT *J. Beaumont's Psyche* (new ed.) XI. clxxiii. 174 Darkness ne'r sate so thick on Egypt's brow, As on the mental eyes of Judas now.
- 1728 POPE *Dunciad* III. 39 For this, our Queen unfolds to vision true Thy mental eye, for thou hast much to view.
- 1837 *Biblical Repertory* Oct. 526 Throwing open the gates of other worlds, that the beams of immortal truth may pour down in all their brightness upon the mental eye.
- 1990 J. YEOVIL *Krokodil Tears* (BNC) 47 It took a peculiar collection of qualities to catch his mental eye.

mental handicap *n.* a condition in which the intellectual capacity of a person is permanently lowered or underdeveloped to a degree that prevents normal function in society (the term is now increasingly avoided).

- 1912 F. H. DANIELSON & C. B. DAVENPORT *Hill Folk* vii. 19 Before adolescence half of the children from The Hill families show evidences of their mental handicap.
- 1947 *Jrnl. Negro Educ.* **16** 475 There is an increasing tendency among educators to have secondary schools care for the adolescent pupil regardless of his mental handicap.
- 1971 *Guardian* 18 Oct. 10/3 Mental illness is an *illness* needing therapeutic treatment... Mental handicap..is an innate condition for which there is no cure.
- 1994 *Daily Tel.* 29 July 3/2 He is backward, he has a low IQ and a degree of mental handicap.

mental healer *n.* a practitioner of mental healing.

- 1885 *Times* 26 May 3/1 The 'wonderful cures' of the mental healers have been so persistently proclaimed that a large proportion of average Bostonians are willing at least to admit that 'there is something in it'.
- 1970 T. S. SZASZ *Ideol. & Insanity* (1973) xiii. 240 The precise activities of the various 'mental healers' are rarely defined by their practitioners.

mental healing *n.* healing effected solely by the mental powers of the healer.

- 1885 *Times* 26 May 3/1 The science of mental healing..is the ambitious name of the movement which its leaders have assumed.
- 1902 W. JAMES *Varieties Relig. Experience* iv. 121 Their savage and primitive philosophy of mental

healing.

1924 J. GALSWORTHY *White Monkey* I. xii. 100 No need of any of these vitamins, false teeth, mental healing.

mental health *n.* health of the mind as distinct from physical health; the condition of a person or group in respect of the functioning of the mind; the branch of medicine that deals with this; frequently *attrib.*

?1650 T. JORDAN *Claraphil & Clarinda* sig. B8 Virtue is a Virgins Wealth, The Magazine of mental Health.

1795 C. LLOYD *Poems Var. Subj.* 104 I'll be thy guest, and give thee mental health.

1833 J. S. MILL *Lett.* (1910) I. 38 I..am so far from being in better mental health than yourself, that I need sympathy quite as much.

1946 C. P. BLACKER (*title*) Neurosis and the mental health services.

1972 R. QUILTY *Tenth Session* 58 A lifetime in mental-health nursing.

1991 S. FORWARD *Obsessive Love* I. 58 The persistence and depth of Hal's unfounded jealousy and suspicion suggested the possibility of what mental health professionals call a 'paranoid personality disorder'.

mental health break *n.* orig. *N. Amer.* time taken off work or school for rest or recuperation, which is claimed as sick leave.

1979 *Washington Post* (Nexis) 11 June B5 Try to get out regularly with your husband or by yourself for a mental-health break.

1999 *Washington Post* (Electronic ed.) 18 June In a world where everyone has sick days, personal leave and mental health breaks, 12 years of perfect attendance is a rare feat.

mental health day *n.* orig. *N. Amer.* a day taken off work or school for rest or recuperation, *esp.* one claimed as sick leave.

1978 *U.S. News & World Rep.* 13 Mar. 80/1 Nurses..talk over their grief after the death of a patient. 'If someone needs a "mental-health day", to get back on an even keel, they get it.'

1995 *Toronto Star* 1 Apr. 20 Many of today's employees take 'mental health' days off work, disguised as sick days.

mental hospital *n.* a hospital or institution where people with mental disorders are treated; a psychiatric hospital.

Now somewhat dated, and sometimes avoided as being potentially offensive.

1898 H. MORTEN *Compl. Syst. Nursing* 249 A year's training in a general hospital, and two years' training in a mental hospital, would be the proper scheme to turn out the best mental nurse.

1964 *Penguin Bk. Austral. Ballads* 18 The discharged mental-hospital patient..with a certificate to

prove that he was sane.

1988 S. BELLOW *Theft* 91 They're like patients who drift in and out of the mental hospital.

mental hygiene *n.* mental health; measures directed towards the preservation of mental health.

1843 W. SWEETSER (*title*) Mental hygiene; or, an examination of the intellect and passions.

1902 B. RUSSELL *Let.* in A. Wood *B. Russell* (1957) viii. 79 Since I finished my book, I have devoted myself to what you [*sc.* Beatrice Webb] would call mental hygiene, with good results so far. Beyond reading a mathematical MS. of Whitehead's, I have done no work for the last fortnight, but have spent my whole days out of doors basking in the return of summer.

1957 S. H. KRAINES *Mental Depressions* xv. 422 The goal of such mental hygiene is to remove and correct those unhealthy attitudes which add to the physically based tension.

1973 *Black World* May 7/1 A crucial matter here is the role The Black Church can play in our mental hygiene and group advancement.

mental illness *n.* a condition which causes serious abnormality in a person's thinking or behaviour, *esp.* one requiring special care or treatment; a psychiatric illness.

Now somewhat dated, and sometimes avoided as being potentially offensive.

1847 E. BRONTË *Wuthering Heights* I. xiv. 347 I thought..it might create a favourable crisis in Catherine's mental illness.

1922 *Jrnl. Royal Statist. Soc.* **85** 361 The lengthiest periods are on account of..nervous and mental illness.

1962 E. CLEAVER in *Negro Hist. Bull.* Mar. 127/2 The continued application of these judgments is the cause of an untold amount of mental illness and frustration.

1991 *Brit. Med. Jrnl.* 9 Mar. 573/1 The responsibility for care of..patients with severe mental illness (schizophrenia and other psychoses) was shared.

mental note *n.* something consigned to memory, *esp.* as requiring attention at a later date; chiefly in **to make a mental note**.

1848 *Southern Lit. Messenger* **14** 632/1 Henry was busily engaged in making mental notes and observations on all he saw and heard.

1876 'M. TWAIN' *Adventures Tom Sawyer* iii. 41 Tom turned in without the added vocation of prayers, and Sid made mental note of the omission.

1929 *Liverpool Daily Courier* 4 Sept. 9/1 If half the members of a Talkie audience shudder every time a character on the screen says..'It's in the bag', the other half make a mental note of the expression for future use.

1994 *New Yorker* 21 Feb. 106/1 Orton had already made a mental note to hot up the new play.

mental patient *n.* a person under medical care for a mental illness; a psychiatric patient.

Now somewhat dated, and sometimes avoided as being potentially offensive.

- 1916 *Boston Med. & Surg. Jrnl.* **174** 528/2 (*heading*) After-care of mental patients.
- 1938 *Brit. Jrnl. Psychol.* **29** 37 The implications of Wiersma's results obtained from mental patients have therefore been shown to hold for normal subjects.
- 1970 'T. COE' *Wax Apple* (1973) iv. 33 The majority of mental patients who have been hospitalized once will be hospitalized several times more.
- 1973 'D. SHANNON' *No Holiday for Crime* (1974) iv. 61 If you're going to say a mental patient, I don't think it was that kind of hospital.
- 1990 *N.Y. Times* 17 Aug. B1/1 Their residents are mainly former mental patients or poor people unable to care for themselves.

mental ratio *n.* = INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT *n.*

- 1921 C. L. BURT *Mental & Scholastic Tests* ii. 151 If a child's mental age be divided by his chronological age, the quotient will state what fraction of ability the child actually possesses... This fraction may be termed..the child's 'intelligence quotient' or, more euphoniously.., his 'mental ratio'.
- 1927 A. HUXLEY *Proper Stud.* 67 A mental ratio is obtained by dividing the child's mental by his chronological age.
- 1934 *Brit. Jrnl. Psychol.* **24** 312 Not all candidates with high mental ratios succeed.

mental reservation *n.* [compare post-classical Latin *reservatio mentalis* (1380, c1620 in British sources)] a qualification tacitly added in making a statement, taking an oath, etc., when it is thought inadvisable to express open dissent; (also) the fact or practice of making such qualifications.

- 1606 W. WARNER *Continuance Albions Eng.* xv. xcv. 380 Tongues-Othes, Harts-Thoughts, Disiunctiues, by a Mental reseruation.
- 1629 J. WADSWORTH *Eng. Spanish Pilgrime* ii. 10 They did it with a mentall reseruation.
- 1690 N. LEE *Massacre of Paris* II. i. 12 Without the smallest Mental Reservation, Equivocation, or the least Reserve.
- 1716 J. ADDISON *Freeholder* No. 6. ¶5 We expressly disavow all evasions and mental reservations whatsoever.
- 1888 J. RICKABY *Moral Philos.* 233 This looks very much like lying, but..it is speaking the truth under a broad mental reservation.
- 1985 W. SHEED *Frank & Maisie* v. 94 Mental reservation is a sly theological concept whose outward sign..is keeping one's fingers crossed.

mental restriction *n.* see RESTRICTION *n.* 4.

mental set *n.* the set (SET *n.*¹ 12) or predisposition of the mind which governs reactions to stimuli; a person's mindset.

- 1909 *Psychol. Rev.* **16** 296 The point of interest is the possible revelation of the 'mental set' even when attention is not concentrated rigorously.
- 1922 R. S. WOODWORTH *Psychol.* iv. 72 Much used also are 'adjustment' and 'mental set', the idea here being to liken the individual to an adjustable machine which can be set for one or another set of work.
- 1963 J. LYONS *Struct. Semantics* ii. 35 He [sc. the hearer] must be thought of as being in a certain state of 'expectancy' (or 'mental set'), in which he is disposed to hear certain units rather than others.
- 1988 *What Diet & Lifestyle* Apr.–May 82/2 To start to enjoy exercise and receive its benefits, the first thing you must stretch is your mental outlook, or what psychologists call your 'mental set'.

mental test *n.* = INTELLIGENCE TEST *n.*

- 1890 J. M. CATTELL in *Mind* **15** 373 Psychology cannot attain the certainty and exactness of the physical sciences, unless it rests on a foundation of experiment and measurement. A step in this direction could be made by applying a series of mental tests and measurements to a large number of individuals.
- 1958 J. M. ARGYLE *Relig. Behaviour* vi. 58 A child's mental age is the average chronological age of children showing the same degree of intelligence, as measured by mental tests.
- 1995 *Newsday* 7 Feb. B26/1 On mental tests, they tend to score six years older than those with few risk factors.

mental tester *n.* a person who tests mental capacity; a psychometrist.

- 1917 *Philos. Rev.* **26** 49 It is often said of the mental tester that he does not know half the time what he is testing.
- 1952 *Brit. Jnl. Psychol.* **43** 23 When the subjects are in full sympathy..but the mental tester rarely has such a favourable situation.
- 1994 *National Rev.* 12 Sept. 78 The historical record reveals that the majority of early mental testers were engaged in a legitimate scientific enterprise.

mental testing *n.* the activity of a mental tester; psychometry.

- 1916 *Jrnl. Philos., Psychol. & Sci. Methods* **13** 73 Psychological diagnosis requires thorough technical training in phases of mental testing.
- 1932 *Psychol. Exchange* **1** 11 The deserving psychometrists are often not discriminated from those who have just taken up mental testing.

- 1959 *Chambers's Encycl.* XII. 655/1 Mental testing began with the testing of intelligence (i.e. of general intellectual capacity).
- 1993 *Guardian* 9 Sept. II. 15/4 He never, however, became a wholehearted comprehensivist, for reasons which went back to his mental testing days.

mental year *n.* the average mental attainment of each year of a child's growth, used as a unit of measurement of mental development.

- 1919 *Biometrika* **12** 369 I find the coefficient of variation in intelligence as measured in mental years to be 19.476.
- 1942 F. J. SCHONELL *Backwardness in Basic Subj.* iv. 74 Rene C. was, in arithmetic, almost two mental years ahead of her achievements in reading.

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