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strange behavior and complex emotions.

During the man's endless cycle of institutionalization, everything possible had been tried for him. Aversive conditioning, reinforcement, behavior modification, drugs — nothing seemed to work.

Physical restraints tended to stop the man from "killing himself," but straitjacketing is recognized as impractical, desperate and cruel.

The Willowbrook administrator suggested that perhaps he might be the perfect candidate for a new chemical therapy using lithium carbonate, a drug plan being considered for Willowbrook but encountering much opposition from parents. Other psychoactive substances had been tried once, but all proved fruitless.

The ward supervisor admitted that the man had been taught to feed himself and that while eating, he is never self-abusive. But because of his abnormal, body-destructive behavior, he had been deemed "not ready" for education programs or activities in other daily living skills.

That was the official explanation given for the man's life. But other professionals at Willowbrook and elsewhere refused to concur, rejecting fully this locked-in vision of despair.

By those who do not know him, the man in the straitjacket is described as a tragic example of man's inhumanity to man, treated with cruelty in Willowbrook's bad days and with indifference now.

When he was a boy, one psychiatrist conjectured, growing up in a large, overcrowded, understaffed institution, he received no personal attention and was deprived of all sensation. Alone, curled fetalily on a ward floor, he found, through constant striking, a way to stimulate himself.

Left to itself in an unstable environment, an unstable personality grew worse. The institutional setting engendered masochism and, with time, the habits became fixed.

The mind, it was explained, is an endlessly complicated organ but one thing about it is clear: It grows by use and atrophies by disuse. Perhaps had the man been treated without restraints — physical or chemical — his behavior now would be more normal.

After all, a sedated child grows unaware of the things around him. He's left to vegetate, some psychiatrists maintained, and to find satisfaction

from his own limited abilities.

It was suggested that kindness and love might have had a more favorable effect. Surrounded with affection, handled with devoted patience and stimulated with fondling play and active programs, the man in the straitjacket might have developed a more stable personality.

Everything should have been tactile, the program director of a non-profit, upstate facility remarked. With touching, hugging and kissing, retarded people grow and alert themselves to their surroundings.

Non-Willowbrook experts agreed it would be hard to change the man's behavior now. But taking him out of that straitjacket, giving him something meaningful to do and showing him some love might be a start.

It takes time, knowhow, money and endless devotion, they warned. And if the idealistic treatment affords only little hope for the man in the straitjacket, it might promise more for the (retarded) children.