

Getting it together

Digging out of January blahs

For a lot of people, we have just entered the emotional lowlands of the year.

The sudden drop in excitement that follows Christmas tears up with the coldest, bleakest weather of our climate.

Almost everything you do seems harder at this time of year. Driving becomes challenging and frustrating. Families are forced together more than ever as they huddle in houses.

Spirits crash with the temperature, as most people experience a loss of freedom. Even mild emotional problems seem magnified by the bleakness of winter.

Couples who escaped their deteriorating marriages by losing themselves in outdoor activities or holiday preparations, now find themselves face-to-face with put-off frustrations.

For many, therefore, at a time when spring couldn't seem farther away and frustrations couldn't seem closer, January is a down time of year.

It is the time of the blahs, an extremely common emotional malfunction in northern climates. It is chiefly characterized by a feeling of low energy and low spirits. Other symptoms include a numbing of interests, feeling of hopelessness and acute boredom.

PEOPLE WHO are suffering from the blahs seem to have given up on their ability to solve frustrating problems. In fact, it almost seems that the blah sufferer is avoiding hopefulness, because it hurts too much to be disappointed. They might even say: "I'll only fail anyway, so why try?"

So begins the vicious cycle of January blahs. Overwhelmed by the frustrations and constraints of winter,

people choose not to hope they can work out their problems.

They look at the obstacles and decide to "give in to the inevitable," surrendering before they have really tried.

Since there is no surer way to fail than by not trying, negative expectations are realized. In fact, things probably get worse.

Confronted with even greater frustration, the blah person tries to withdraw from the pain of failure and buries his feelings in sleep. His generally numb and tired feelings increase; he becomes even less capable of solving his problems as emotions spiral downward.

The further this process goes, the harder it is to stop it. That's why the secret to beating January blahs is to catch them early and do something about them right away.

BUT WHAT can you do once you've recognized you have a case of blahs?

The answers come in two categories: Do something about the problems that led to the blahs, and do something about the blahs themselves.

Doing something about the original problems involves a lot of fairly obvious approaches like talking them over with a friend or professional counselor. It may be useful to read a good self-understanding book.

Looking for ways to get a new perspective on the problem is usually very helpful. Sometimes all that is needed is some uninterrupted thinking

By
BOB TRENZ,
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time when you can really concentrate on what is bothering you.

No matter which of these methods you use, the important deterrent to blahs is that you are actively trying to solve the problem, even if you are only chipping away at a slow pace.

Unfortunately, if the blahs spiral has gone too far, doing something about the problem may seem out of reach in your discouraged mood. When this occurs, your main remedy is to work on improving how you feel.

Different people find different methods successful. Some have discovered that a little pampering has a great curative effect on emotions. It may be a warm bath, shopping spree, back rub from a special friend, each person seems to have found one special pampering method.

MAINLY, PAMPERING: yourself means raising spirits by doing things that make you feel good. For some people, having a good,

cathartic crying session provides just the right kind of relief.

Others find the same kind of relief in a let-it-all-hang-out argument.

You might also try reading an inspirational book or thinking about what's valuable in your life. Sometimes a little solitude or getting involved in a captivating project is the right salve for blah sore spots.

The point is, if you feel too discouraged and down to be able to work on problems, then do what you can to relieve flattened feelings.

For too long, people have treated the blahs like an incurable disease—something you can't do anything to prevent or halt.

The important thing to know about January blahs is that you can take an active role in beating them.

Bob Trenz is a Rochester psychologist and marriage counselor. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be sent to the Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 418 N. Main, Rochester, 6002.



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Child services bill is topic

Rep. James O'Hara (D-Utica) will speak on the child and family services bill (HR-2986) at the annual dinner of the Michigan Inter-Professional Association on Marriage, Divorce and the Family, Inc. Thursday, Jan. 22.

The event will be held in Fairlane Manor, 10000 Hubbard, Dearborn. Congressman O'Hara will discuss whether the proposed family services act is an attempt to "socialize" the American family and reduce parental control of children. He will also relate what other federal legislation is pending concerning family life problems.

During the meeting the association will honor George E. Bowles, circuit judge, for his role as founder and president of the organization.

Price of the dinner is \$11 per person. To make reservations contact the association office, 1601 Ford Building, Detroit.

Chuck Olson to perform

Chuck Olson, vocal soloist and speaker, will perform at the guest night banquet sponsored by the Christian Women's Club of the Christian Business and Professional Women of America on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 7 p.m. in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Dearborn.

A tenor soloist, Olson averages more than 20 concerts each month in churches, at banquets, for oratorio societies and on television and radio. He has appeared in crusades conducted by Dave Breese, Aubrey McGinn, Lehman Strauss, Ralph Bell and Roy Gustafson of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Reservations should be made by Jan. 24. Tickets are \$7.50 each. Ticket chairman is Mrs. William Thimme, 4702 Clare, Plymouth. For further information contact Mrs. Hawk Miller, 1839 Inlandbrook, Northville.

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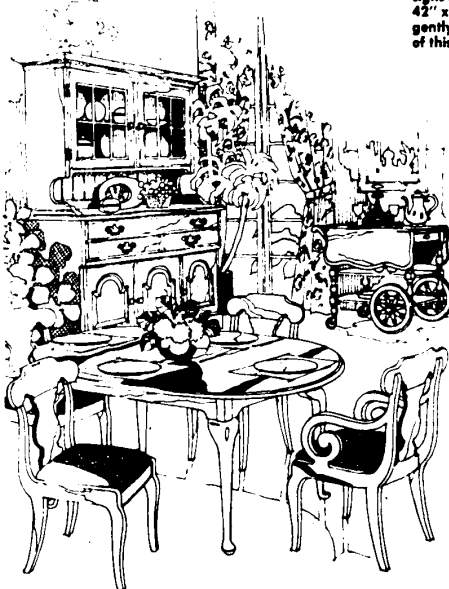
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