

Getting it together Don't fight depression — join it

As an emotion, depression has acquired a much worse reputation than it deserves. Popular opinion says it's a disability, a mental illness.

When it was discovered that a vice-presidential candidate had been treated for depression, many reacted as though he had been the victim of some disgusting and incurable disease. His depression was seen as a weakness in his character. He was a casualty of the generally negative attitude we have had toward a benign emotional state.

Far from being a sign of mental abnormality, depression is a normal reaction of a healthy mind. It is our mind's attempt to buffer us from shocks by turning down the volume of painful experiences. It slows us down and encourages us to break from our usual pace. And in the face of disappointment or loss, that is probably the best thing we could do for ourselves.

THE HARMFUL DISABILITIES that have been blamed on depression is not actually due to the depression reaction itself. What causes the problem is when we react the wrong way to our down feelings.

Rejecting our mind's request for a rest period, we bury ourselves more deeply in our obligations, running from depression as though it were a dangerous mental monster. Or we take the other extreme and drown ourselves in sadness and surrender.

Both extremes are wrong. Running from depression keeps you from understanding the source of your problems. Lying yourself in despair prevents you from doing what is necessary to resolve the crisis.

Both probing the misery of your loss because they lead you away from the personal re-adjustment that is so essential to a constructive solution to your problem.

On the other hand, when depression is approached as a positive experience, it can actually help you turn most disappointments into opportunities for self-improvement. The trick is to go along with your mind's request for time-out to systematically contemplate your problem.

If you want to try this, the first thing to do is to make a firm appointment with yourself: a scheduled block of time with one agenda item: understanding your personal problem. Depending on the severity and complexity of the crisis, you may want to set aside hours or days which are safe from interruptions. You may even wish to remove yourself physically from your daily routine.

SOME WILL FIND that they make the most of this time if they are alone. Others

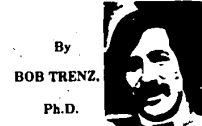
will like having a friend or spouse as a sounding board and co-problem solver. The important thing is to use this time to focus on the source of your pain; the disappointment you have suffered. Even though this may hurt, you have to fully experience your loss. To understand your problem you must directly confront even the most painful realities.

Among these realities are the obstacles to a solution. The reason discouragement is so often a part of depression is that it seems as though practical solutions are all tucked away. You can't change jobs because you can't afford a drop in income. You can't feel loved because you have no prospects of meeting the right person.

To the depressed person, each of these blocks seems like an impenetrable wall. He assumes that they are real and that any solution to his problem must respect them as real limits.

Some of these perceived limits are truly immovable, but many are more flexible than we think. Many apparent obstacles are only there because we assume they are, and we have never really tested our assumption.

If you're feeling boxed in by your ap-



By
BOB TRENZ,
Ph.D.

er realities, then be sure that your assumptions are correct. Examine them critically. Test them by experimenting with them.

You may find that the wall is not even there. You may discover, for example, that you can be quite happy with substantially less income. You may learn that developing a successful love relationship doesn't require that you must start with two perfectly matched "right" persons.

DISCOVERIES SUCH AS these are the keys to turning a depression into a positive, constructive experience. But they are not possible unless you commit yourself to action.

Action is the main road out of the dumps. Even if you're not sure that you are moving in the right direction, any sun-

der attempt to do something about your problems will have an immediate effect on your depression.

By taking action you are mobilizing your stalled energies. By taking action you are testing your realities, adding to your experience, and increasing your ability to cope with your disappointing circumstances.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Many times it is, often simpler than it seems. But sometimes you may find that you need help to turn your frustrating life around. It may be, for instance, that the pain of your loss is so severe that you just can't face it alone. Your problem may seem so incomprehensible that you feel a need for an assistant problem-solver.

For these reasons, depressed people often find it helpful to enlist the aid of professional problem-solvers. A professional counselor can be a good source of objective opinions by which to check how realistic your assumed limits are. He can also serve as an encourager of risk-taking—thereby helping you to take the actions that are necessary to solve your problems.

Bob Trenz is a Rochester psychologist and marriage counselor. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be sent to the Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 410 N. Main, Rochester, 14603.

Hot line gives help on canning

Conflicting recommendations for home canning procedures tend to confuse the less knowledgeable canner, according to the Oakland County Public Health Division.

Confusion can lead to mistakes which can result not only in spoiled foods, but the possibility of a person's becoming ill from eating foods improperly processed, according to Anne Stevens, home economist for the Oakland Cooperative Extension Service. The extension service is a resource for food processing information.

If the answer is not immediately available, a hot line call by Ms. Stevens to Michigan State University will get the information in a short time. Ann Stevens can be reached at 658-0904.

A report done by Pennsylvania State University in 1974 on the sealing performance of jar lids indicates that lids manufactured by four companies produced no canning failures from improper sealing. The four manufacturers are Anchor Hocking, Ball, K&H and Torque-Rite.

Copies of this report are available from Louise W. Hamilton, professor of foods and nutrition education, Pennsylvania State University, 364 At Building, University Park, Pa. 16802.

The results of canning fresh fruits and vegetables can bring great eating pleasure and produce a sense of personal satisfaction. These can be achieved if the job to be done is fully understood and properly executed.

Council in fashion for annual lunch

Members of the Greater Detroit Section, National Council of Jewish Women will be honored at an Annual Paid-Up Membership Luncheon meeting at noon Monday, Sept. 10 at Congregation Adat Shalom, 2901 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

Just back from Europe, Marj Kunz, fashion editor of the Detroit Free Press, will present a fashion forecast and her personal comments and photographs of the current New York and European collections. Claire Pearson of Somerset Mall, Troy, will present an exciting fashion show featuring council members as models.

For reservations or membership information call the council office at 537-9604.

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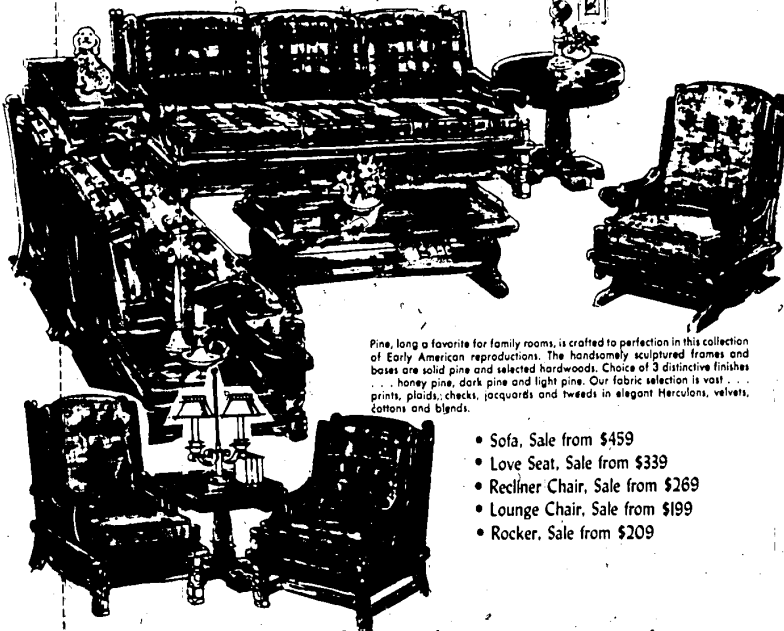
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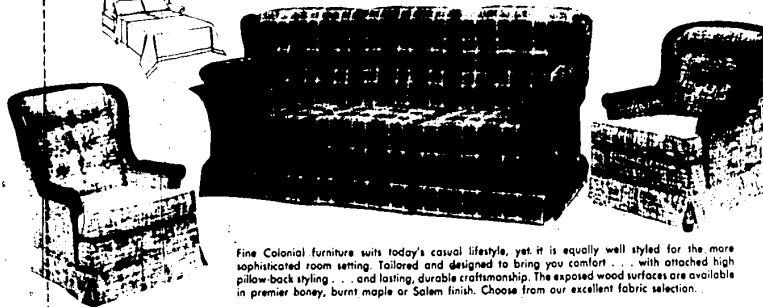
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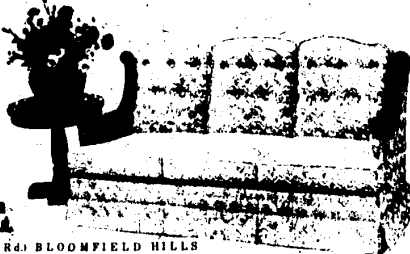
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