

Winter blahs:

Post-holiday blues can be cured by friends, activity



A lone man wades through a snowy field on a chilly January morning. Psychiatrists say wintery weather can increase feelings of sadness and loneliness.

By Mattie Greene
staff writer

EVERY YEAR about this time after holiday reveling, there's a malady that strikes any number of people and is no respecter of race, creed, color or sex. It's called the winter blahs.

Those suffering from winter blahs are easily recognizable. During January and February they're irritable — they snarl their spouses, children and even the dog. A glance at the snow and they complain of being cold. They hate driving in the snow. And, as spring approaches, the symptoms seem to miraculously subside.

Psychiatrists say there are any number of reasons for the winter blahs. It has to do with the weather, unfulfilled expectations and the lack of loved ones during the holiday season. The festiveness of holidays makes it all bearable, but once it's over the blahs may set in.

"The actual feelings of cold, longer nights and the response to the holidays" accounts for the blahs or blues during winter, said Southfield psychiatrist Philip Parker.

Dr. Parker believes that if Christmas came in the summer there wouldn't be quite as many depressed people.

"People have a tendency to associate darkness and cold with being alone and sad," he said. "It's a traditional fear. Add the cold weather to not having supportive relationships with family or friends or not having a enough money to pay bills and a person can become very depressed."

WARMTH HAS ALWAYS been associated with closeness and well-being, stemming from our infant relationships with our mothers, Parker said. A person who perceives everyone else as happy, may have a tendency to feel more alone, he said.

The weather definitely affects the patients of Linda Logsdon, another Southfield psychiatrist. "Bad weather makes my patients feel irritable and feel down when they come into the office," Dr. Logsdon said.

Although the blues may start during the holidays, the real blues usually don't come until after the holidays. Psychiatric emergencies increase during the holidays but, they surge dramatically in January and February, according to Dr. Beverly Fauman, who specializes in emergency psychiatry and is director of psychiatric education at Sinai Hospital.

"People are not viewing wintertime in the proper perspective. They see it as a dormant time and try to deny weather as a component, and it's not possible. Planning warm weather activities and having home projects is a way to get away from sadness."

— Dr. Linda Logsdon

"Emergencies and suicides generally grow out of clinical depression, which is much more serious and long lasting than the holiday blues," she said.

"Important losses are most keenly felt: a divorce, the loss of a loved one, the enforced absence of someone close. It's normal to feel sad when you're thinking about a void in your life while the joy of the season is all around. At the same time, some people are looking ahead with dread at the prospect of a new year which they fear will bring new problems and woes."

LUCKILY FOR MOST people, the winter blahs is not an incurable disease. Those who treat serious cases of depression, however, are definitely opposed to some common methods used in trying to get rid of the blues. Psychiatrists all say to discard the notion of trying to use chemicals in the form of alcohol (a depressant) and other drugs as home remedies.

"These can only lead to more depressed feelings," warns Dr. Parker, who adds that friends also should be careful of pushing alcohol on lonely friends.

"If you really want to help a friend, be a listening friend rather than tell someone to have a few drinks and feel better."

There are any number of healthy ways to overcome the winter blahs, short of moving to a warmer climate. Many experts agree that it does take a special effort to combat the blues.

Logsdon attacks the problem from a mental standpoint.

"People are not viewing wintertime in the proper perspective. They see it as a dormant time and try to deny weather as a component, and it's not possible," Logsdon said. "Planning warm weather activities and having home projects is a way to get away from sadness."

A cold weather person herself, Logsdon advises people to create their own warmth. "This can be a wonderful nurturing time with families and friends coming together inside around the fireplace," she said.

Maintaining a level of physical activity is important, also, according to Logsdon. If you're not a winter sports enthusiast, working out in a gym will help.

"I WOULDN'T recommend shoveling snow to the point of having a coronary, but that's an activity also."

While Logsdon is perfectly willing to curl up with a book and read on snowy days, Parker likes to go out and build a snowman with his 3-year-old daughter. He suggests other outdoor activities, such as cross country skiing, to will make the weather a friend rather than an enemy.

Parker encourages the lonely to "reach out to another human being."

"This can be in the way of friends, but doing volunteer work and helping others can also be a satisfying way of stilling that inner emptiness that many people feel at this time," he said.

To sum it up, here is a list of blues-chasing reminders:

- Take advantage of the weather.
- Recognize that if you feel down you are not alone.
- Get together with people who make you feel good or who feel good about being with you.
- Talk over feelings with a friend, relative, clergyman or family psychiatrist.
- Set realistic and optimistic limits on your expectations.
- Resist the temptation to drink away sorrows in alcohol.
- If you have children, work with them to create a special gift for their other parent or someone else they love.
- If you are a divorced parent, do your best to see that your child has free access to the other parent.
- Join children and family in enjoying new games and toys.

memory lane

Memories, memories... have we got the memories. And we'd like to share them with you. Using local newspaper files, we're dishing up generous slices of life in the Farmington community from 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago.

JAN. 6, 1944 —

A SALVAGE committee representing Farmington and Farmington Township organized for a quick and intensive collection drive during the next few days. Residents were asked to bring their waste paper to the Farmington Lumber and Coal Co. yard. John Hunt was the chairman of the drive.

"THINK TWICE," advised the Around the Block column, "before you buy something you don't actually need. The Fourth War Loan is due to start the middle of January, and every bond you buy will mean that you are giving our young men and women a better chance to come home, and soon. Remember — For Bullets Now, For Bread Later, Buy War Bonds."

NEARLY 9,000 operating and clerical employees of the Michigan Bell Telephone Co. have been granted a wage increase of \$3 a week by the War Labor Board, the company announced.

SHORT ITEM: "Hang bath towels singly, a third over the line. Shake when dry to fluff up the nap. Do not iron towels."

CLASSIFIED AD: "FOR SALE — Used sink, toilet and pitcher pump. \$5. 33315 Shlawassee, corner Ross." Another classified: "FOR SALE — Canaries, yellow, green and cinnamon, \$2. Phone 888-W 32340 Grand River."

"SKILLED AND unskilled men needed for war work," read an advertisement for Detroit Diesel Engine, Outer Drive and Plymouth Road. "54-hour week! Good pay!"

JAN. 7, 1954 —

CLASSES WERE to open soon at the new Westbrook Elementary School on Osma Street in the Clarenceville School District. The seven-room school had been completed several months earlier, but lacked a water purification system.

MEN'S PULLOVER sweaters — "100 percent wool, many colors" — were advertised by Dancer's Department Store in downtown Farmington.

THE CIVIC Theatre on Grand River offered "Stand At Apache River" with Stephen McNally and Julie Adams, and "White Lightning" with Stanley Clements and Gloria Blondell.

THE FARMINGTON Township School District, in cooperation with other Oakland County Districts, sponsored a new and intensive teacher preparation program to alleviate the critical teacher shortage in this area. O.E. Dunckel, superintendent of schools, said elementary school enrollment in Farmington showed a need for 12 additional teachers in 1954.

"THE RUSH MAY be over for most of us," noted the Around the Block column, "but it seems to be still going on as far as the Farmington City and Township Fire Departments are concerned. During the past weekend... the volunteers seem to be going to or coming from a fire call most of the time. This may be one way to start off a new year, but it far from the ideal way. Let's hope it doesn't become a habit in 1954."

JAN. 2, 1964 —

EARL C. OPPERTHAUSER, a new trustee on the Farmington Township Board, was sworn in by Township Clerk Floyd A. Cairns before the board's last regular meeting on Dec. 23. Oppertthausen was appointed to replace Peter Oliff, who resigned to take an out-of-town position with his company.

A COLUMN, Kendallwood Comments, noted: "Home for the holidays from colleges are: Tom Armstrong of Hawberry, attending Albion College; the Kirsten boys, Rob and Rick, of Brandywine, both attending Michigan State; Carol Willoughby of Farmersville, attending Michigan State."

SHORT ITEM: "An open mind is all very well in its way, but it ought now to be so open that there is no keeping anything in or out of it."

THE FARMINGTON Public Schools will have three new cars for the district's driver training program as the result of an offer made by two area dealerships, Town and Country Dodge and O'Brien Ford. Town and Country was to have provided two cars, and O'Brien Ford one at no cost to the district. However, the dealers' advertising will appear on the outside of the autos.

JAN. 3, 1974 —

A FINANCIAL crunch for the Farmington School District in 1974 was predicted by Dr. Mervyn Ross, board president, in a summary of upcoming events. "This year, spiraling inflation and the energy crunch have eroded our ability to establish firm projections for anticipated expenses," Ross said.

FARMINGTON'S SENIOR citizens will be able to ride anywhere in town for 50 cents beginning Jan. 9 in special taxis with "senior special" signs on the back doors. Riders must be at least 62, and some proof of age will be required.

EDWARD BAGDON, a former all-American football player at the University of Michigan, has been appointed marine sales manager of Perkins Engines Inc., a major diesel engine supplier located in Farmington. Bagdon, a gridiron guard in 1948, lives in Northville.

CLARENCEVILLE HIGH'S basketball team stayed winless in the 1973-74 season, losing twice in its own holiday tournament. Coach Bob Wolf's Trojans lost the Lutheran West (67-60) and Dearborn Heights Crestwood (42-41). The losses dropped Clarenceville to 0-7.

Show off your eyes with Shadows '84 from Ultima II

Twenty fabulous shades, from warm earthy tones to vibrant brights. Rich colors to blend and layer. The look is what you make it. Soft...dramatic...emphatic. These shadows are yours in a trim, mirrored case for just \$10 with any \$8 or more Ultima II purchase. We suggest Creamy Powder Blush, \$9. Clara Concentrated Cologne Spray, 8 oz., \$11. Advanced Formula Mascara, \$10. 2500 bonuses.*

In Hudson's Aisles of Beauty.
*Total bonuses at all Hudson's stores while quantities last.

HUDSON'S

ORDER BY PHONE: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
In Metro Detroit, call 569-2454. Elsewhere, order toll-free 1-800-233-2000.