

Rx briefs

Tai Chi

Tai Chi from the Arthritis Foundation, a new joint-sale activity from a trusted source, is coming to Canton in March.

The Tai Chi classes will take place at Summit on the Park in Canton. Daytime classes will be held 1-2 p.m. Wednesdays beginning March 12. Evening classes will be held 7-8 p.m. Thursdays beginning March 13. Tuition for a 10-week class series of one class per week is \$99. All classes are taught by instructors who have undergone special Arthritis Foundation training.

To register or for more information, contact the Arthritis Foundation, Michigan Chapter, at (800) 968-3030.

Tai Chi from the Arthritis Foundation is appropriate for anyone seeking a joint-sale exercise program, including those with mild to moderate arthritis. Tai Chi may help reduce pain and stiffness, and improve mobility, breathing and relaxation. It also may help with memory, concentration, coordination, muscle strength, stamina, stress, depression, circulation, and heart and lung function.

Home care

Many families in Wayne County have one thing in common - caring for aging loved ones at home. Comfort Keepers of Wayne County supports adults who require extra attention yet choose to live in the comfort and privacy of their own home. The company's nonmedical assistance ranges from meal preparation to basic companionship. It serves clients in Wayne, Westland, Garden City, Redford, Livonia, Dearborn and Dearborn Heights. "Comfort Keepers lends a hand - from a few hours a day to 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said owner Jim Jones. "For Wayne County families, this offers a great alternative to prematurely admitting loved ones into a nursing home or assisted living facility. We find we also bring much-needed relief from the emotional and financial impacts of caregiving as well as aging."

For more information, please contact Jim Jones or Judy Jones at (734) 727-4663.

Cancer retreat

Saint Joseph Mercy Cancer Care Center and the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center are collaborating with the Christy Herten Fund for Community Cancer Care to present the "Circle of Care Family Retreat" to be held noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 29, at the U-M Matthaei Botanical Gardens on Diabolo Road in Superior Township. The retreat is ideal for cancer patients and their families because it provides an environment for communication, learning and sharing. Family members who attend the retreat will learn how cancer affects their lives and discover ways to cope and hope. Activities include a family nature walk and candle-lighting ceremony. Each family will create a "Feeling of Cancer" collage to help them identify their thoughts and feelings about the cancer diagnosis of their family member.

The fee is \$10 per person and \$25 per family. The Family Retreat is open to all family members (immediate and extended), friends and children age 5 and older. Space is limited. Reservations must be made by March 14 by calling (734) 712-2920.

ANXIOUS AMERICA

Dealing with terrorism anxiety

BY RENEE SNOGLUND
STAFF WRITER

For Connie Graye of Plymouth Township, the events of Sept. 11 put into perspective the current threat of war in the Middle East.

"My life changed during that first month after 9/11," said the 50-year-old Plymouth Township resident who works with her mother-in-law in a decades-old, family-owned greenhouse. "I didn't want to eat. I was so opposed to war. This time around, I've decided to take better care of myself."

Contributing to Graye's new sense of equilibrium is the fact that her husband, Joe, recently survived a devastating illness. What was first thought to be pneumonia turned into a life-threatening strep infection that raged through his body and eventually destroyed two valves in his heart.

"Not knowing if he was going to make it, I had to shut down the (war) news," said Graye.

Fortunately, some Americans, like Graye, are taking the war news in stride. However, many are struggling with some tough questions: What does the war on terrorism mean for my family and me? How safe are we? What should we be doing to prepare? When the U.S. Department of Homeland Security raises the threat level up to a prep, the nation's anxiety level follows suit.

NO ANSWERS

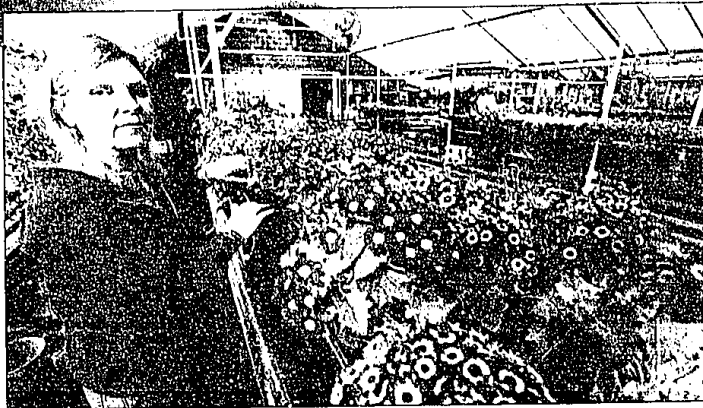
Many of the questions now facing us have no clear-cut answers.

"The government alert system represents something that we're not familiar with, and when we have something that's both unfamiliar and threatening, that's a good recipe for stress, anxiety, difficulty sleeping and all that goes along with just being worried," said Joseph Himle, Ph.D., associate director, Anxiety Disorders Program, Department of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan Health System.

"Many of the sort of stressors we're accustomed to we have some degree of control over - we can drive more carefully, we can stay out of a dark alley, we can stop smoking," said Himle. "In this case, it's harder for us to control the threat we face from terrorism."

Elizabeth Fellows still has vivid and disturbing memories from her youth of graphic television coverage of the Vietnam War. "The evening news showed the attacks, the killings, the war taking place in front of me," says the mother of four, ages 6 to 19. "I don't want my children exposed to that type of violence, day in and day out. They will know what's going on with the war in Iraq, with the war on terrorism, but I will not expose them to that kind of relentless coverage."

That's a smart decision, says Dr. Barbara Felt, a developmental behavioral pediatrician at the University of Michigan Health System. "Disturbing images like we see on news programs that run the same footage every 15 minutes can be disastrous for children."



Connie Graye of Plymouth Township is not letting the possibility of war interfere with her daily activities. She has gained a new perspective on life since her husband's near-death experience.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit the following Web sites:

■ Health Topics A to Z: Understanding Stress
<http://www.med.umich.edu/lib/primary/libell.htm>

■ Health Topics A to Z: Anxiety
http://www.med.umich.edu/lib/aha/aha_anxiety_crs.htm

■ American Psychological Association: Different kinds of stress.
<http://www.helping.apa.org/work/stress4.html>

■ Department of Homeland Security.
<http://www.dhs.gov>

■ Department of Homeland Security.
<http://www.ready.gov>

People react more to concrete threats, said John Dubosh, supervisor, Clinical Services, Hegira-Westland Counseling Center.

"When 9/11 occurred, people reacted in a more overt manner. People were feeling threatened. People who had delusional issues got worse. Some people imagined themselves dying."

Regarding today's threat, clients of Hegira-Westland talk about the issues in more global, diffuse terms, said Dubosh. However, he emphasized that his counselors report only a "small minority" of clients feeling personally threatened. These are people who have few ways of maintaining internal security and are seeking external means of maintaining that security, he said. Therefore, they may buy far

too many rolls of duct tape or too many gallons of water.

John Lockett, principal of Hayes Elementary School in Westland and the father of three young children, said while he hasn't noticed increased anxiety in his students, some parents have expressed more concern about school safety since Sept. 11.

Lockett's own children are taking the war news in stride.

"We're open about it. They hear about it and they move right on through it," he said. "We spend a lot of time with our kids. If we pick up any signs (of anxiety), we ask them about it."

COPING

Normally people go about their usual routine to help manage everyday stress and anxiety. Work and fun, rest and relaxation all help keep our lives in balance, said Himle.

"What can happen during times like these is that we cut back on many of the things we use to balance our lives, to help control our stress. We may spend less time with others, we cut back on our exercise, we don't do as many things for fun - we cut back at the very time we need these activities the most."

In addition to maintaining a healthy balance in your life, Himle is a strong believer in using your body's natural instincts to notice when things aren't quite right.

"However, people who try to keep too high a level of vigilance will find themselves more fatigued and anxious, and often less able to respond to a real threat," he said. "I think that if you actually decide to hole up in a center room of your house and duct tape the windows, you'll likely end up more stressed than if you just went about your business and trusted your instincts to tell you when to act."

Preparation does seem to help ease anxiety, and having a few rolls of duct tape won't hurt

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH TERRORISM ANXIETY

■ Continue normal everyday activities to maintain balance in your life.

■ Add stress-reducing activities such as slow-paced breathing, yoga or other forms of relaxation therapy.

■ Trust your instincts to tell you when something or someone seems suspicious.

■ Don't overreact to perceived threats of terrorism by taking radical steps to protect yourself.

■ Do take time to prepare for an emergency.

■ Be informed, but try to avoid information overload.

PLEASE SEE COPING, C7

Talking with kids about war and terrorism

However, television and other media do have their place in helping our children deal with the larger issues taking place in the world and possibly in their own communities.

"It's useful when important events are taking place - that we know our children will hear about in other contexts such as school - to make sure they have accurate information," she says. Felt suggests parents may want to tape the news, preview it and use portions as a backdrop for family discussions.

FAMILY TIME

In these uncertain times, Felt strongly urges parents to set aside time to come together as a family, to provide a place of support and structure. "Families in which

members have been doing their own thing may want to rethink their priorities and make family time to discuss these issues," she says.

For parents of young children, maintaining daily routines will go a long way toward easing fears and giving a sense of security. Older children will be more acutely aware of potential dangers to themselves and their family members. "Asking what children and teens have heard, responding to their questions and clarifying misperceptions - this is a very good place to start with children of all ages," says Felt.

"I think about it a lot because, like, it's just scary," says 9-year-old Matthew Fellows, who has been having difficulty sleeping lately. "I want to stay closer to home because, well, I heard that on the

news they said the terrorists are going to invade," he continues.

WARNING SIGNS

Sleeping and eating disturbances, hyperactivity, hyper-vigilance, difficulty concentrating, aggressiveness, anger and somatic complaints, such as headaches and stomachaches - all are warning signs that a child is distressed, explains Felt.

"The degree of disturbance varies depending on the age of the child and whether or not they have witnessed something directly," Felt says. "But even toddlers and infants can show disrupted feeding and eating patterns, which is

PLEASE SEE KIDS, C7