

## Getting it together

# Considering professional help? Choose carefully

The best, and worst, laid articles often end up on the cutting room floor. Inadvertently, that's what happened to much of last week's Getting it Together. And, since it's a topic that should be considered completely, the following is a re-run of the whole article:

Psychology has established itself in your life, whether you like it or not. Thanks to wide-spread technological advances, generous government support, health insurance coverage, and an abundance of new professionals

pouring from our training institutions, the amount of psychologically-oriented services available to the American consumer has increased immensely in the past two decades.

For most of us, the chances that we or our family members will be exposed to some form of psychological technique are very high. School kids are routinely tested and labeled. Marriage partners are turning to professional counseling at increasing rates. Seeking psychotherapy from social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists is no longer rare.

But, is it worth it? The average psychological counseling interview costs around \$40 regardless of whether you pay for it with your tax dollars, your health insurance premiums, or cash. And people often rely heavily on professional advice to make important, life-changing decisions. Yet, surprisingly few consumers of psychological services really question their quality.

**THE TRUTH** is that psychological and psychiatric techniques can do a lot less than most would like to believe. They are useful, but limited—more

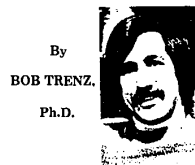
limited than even many professionals are apt to admit. Most scientific studies of the effectiveness of psychotherapy, for example, find that thirty to fifty per cent of those who seek it are not helped.

Furthermore, the quality of service, the professional competence, and professional ethics can vary tremendously from professional to professional. And, because all professional counselors are better with some problems than with others, the kind of help you need is another important determinant of your probable success in counseling.

This is not to say that you can't find helpful, effective psychological services. They definitely do exist. But it takes some active looking to be sure that you get the high quality you need.

In view of these facts, I'm frequently amazed at the blind faith and gullibility that consumers carry with them to the temples of psychology. Parents accept test results and diagnostic labels for their kids that could have heavy consequences, and they don't even ask for a second professional opinion.

Clients continue to accept treatment that goes on for months without any feeling of progress on their problems. Couples place the future of their marriage in the hands of a name from the



By  
**BOB TRENZ,**  
Ph.D.

yellow pages with no attempt to shop around or to find out what approach their selected therapist will use.

**WHY DON'T** consumers apply as much care in their selection of a counselor as they do when choosing a car or a television set?

For some, it's because they want to go on believing in the magic power of psychotherapists. Some are intimidated by their own lack of psychological training. And a lot of people just feel that it's not polite to question the abilities or appropriateness of a professional.

The fact is that you won't hurt a competent professional's feelings by being an assertive consumer. Actually, good counselors prefer to be taken with a grain of skeptical salt. They know that no amount of competence

can keep them from making frequent mistakes in their complicated, subtle business.

But they also know that if they are dealing with a passive, blindly receptive client these mistakes may not be caught and corrected. On the other hand, a skeptical client who grapples with advice and insights is likely to improve on the professional's attempts, creating a mutual intelligence that is superior to what either could have produced alone.

Consumers of psychological services don't need an advanced degree to be accurate judges of the effectiveness of the counseling they receive. They should trust their common sense. If a test result doesn't make sense, question it carefully. If professional advice doesn't feel right, challenge it.

The techniques of the psychological professions should be seen as only supplemental to our personal judgement and intelligence—not as a replacement.

Test results and opinions should be considered as just another opinion. Important personal decisions must still be made according to what makes sense to you—even if that means going against the opinion of an expert.

Bob Trenz is a psychologist and marriage counselor in Rochester. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be sent to P.O. Box 64, Rochester 48063.

## Consumer mailbag

# Time for organic gardens

Since food prices have risen sky-high I have decided to try a vegetable garden in my backyard. Can you give me any tips?

J.S., Birmingham

I have recently become aware of toxic pesticide residue in foods. To avoid this, I have decided to plant my own garden. Can you give me some organic gardening suggestions?

C.D., Detroit

Right now is the time to sit down and plan your garden—what seeds to buy, proper location of your garden plot and how to prepare the soil.

It is best to start with a small garden and it helps to draw a diagram on paper showing the layout. (Save this diagram to note ideas and changes for planning next year's garden.)

Find a sunny location and "dig in" when the soil is no longer wet. Using a spade or rototiller, dig up the entire plot. Mix in any compost you might have and add materials such as dog hair, fireplace ashes, shells from sunflower seeds, shredded newspaper, sawdust, tea leaves, coffee grounds, lint from your clothes dryer, contents from the vacuum cleaner bag, fruit and vegetable peelings and well-rotted manure or organic fertilizer such as milorganite. Thoroughly blend these materials into the soil. Finally, smooth with a rake and you should have a rich, fluffy medium ideal for garden crops.

Now you may plant your seeds according to packet directions, remembering to place tall growing plants where they will not shade shorter ones. If you vary your plantings with a patch of lettuce here and a patch of beans elsewhere, you will discourage pest insects by confusing them. (One exception to "patch-planting": don't plant different species of the squash family such as pumpkins, melons, cucumbers, or zucchini close together or you may wind up with squampkins of cucumbers.)

Interspersing your plantings with garlic, chives, mint, sage, parsley, marigolds and nasturtiums serves to discourage garden pests and adds color and fragrance.

Once your plants have sprouted and you have thinned them according to directions, you might want to reduce the weeding chores by mulching thickly between the rows and at the base of plants with hay, grass clippings or leaves. This will smother the weeds and help retain moisture.

Watering during dry weather should be a good soaking to encourage deep root growth; the equivalent of one inch of rain per week.

If you are still bothered by some garden pests, don't despair. They usually attack the sickly plants, thereby weeding "nature's way," leaving stronger healthy plants for you. If you should have an infestation, you might try spraying them off with the garden

hose or using a homemade brew of boiled hot red peppers or garlic to which you add a few drops of soap.

For additional sources of organic gardening information, check your local library or write to the editors of "Organic Gardening & Farming," Emmaus, Pa. 18049. The Cooperative Extension Service, 1200 N. Telegraph Road, Pontiac, has some good tips on companion planting and organic fertilizers.

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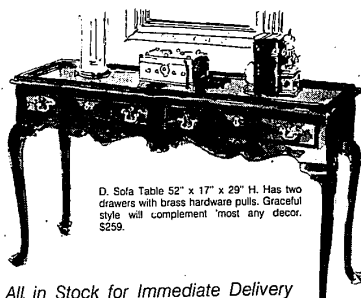
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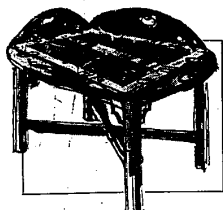


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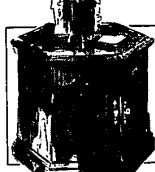
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