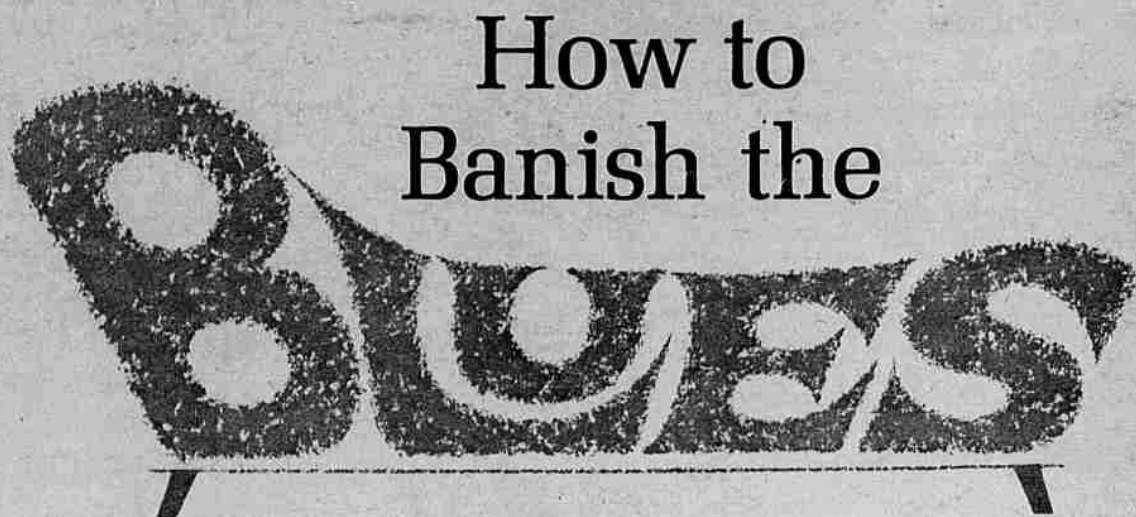




How to Banish the Blues

A psychiatrist suggests some couch-less cures for that low-down feeling

By **ROBERT L. MEINEKER, M.D.**, with Theodore Irwin

AT ONE TIME or another, most of us have a bout with the blues. Failure to be invited to a party, a husband away on a business trip, a disapproving remark by the boss, or sundry other factors send our spirits plummeting. We have a deep-down, out-of-sorts feeling, our efficiency suffers, we take on a don't-care attitude, deprecate ourselves, brood over imaginary mistakes, can't make decisions, and exaggerate our worries about everything.

What can we do about such moods?

First, let's try to understand that a mild depression is normal when we suffer a disappointment or temporarily lose someone or something important to us, whether it's "love" or prestige. A healthy person should be able to spring back in a short time, appreciate himself again, find renewed hope, and gain perspective on the cause of his blues.

In contrast, some people are addicted to the blues, becoming downcast over minor frustrations or disappointments which shouldn't faze them. More serious is the psychotic type of depression, in which the feeling of sadness and worthlessness goes far beyond the gravity of the disappointment that set it off. In extreme cases, the victim may become wholly incapable of coping with life.

Many people appear to have regular sieges of gloom. It may come on the familiar "Blue Monday," which stems from confronting the long week of work, frustrations, or tensions ahead. On the other hand, it may strike on weekends when otherwise-busy people face too much leisure, and an inner compulsion to work develops guilt feelings about being idle.

There are many acceptable ways to snap out of the dumps. Ballerina Danilova, for example, takes a bubble bath. TV actress Arlene Francis goes out

alone for a drive in her car. Screen star Jack Carson brushes them off by watching his old movies.

I believe the following suggestions may help break that occasional depression. Some will work for you, others will not, for the roots of the blues generally differ with each individual. Pick the ways that are best for you:

1. Search out the reason for your drooping spirits. Is it trivial or really important? Bring your feelings out in the open by discussing what's bothering you with your spouse, a close friend, or someone else you respect and trust. Sharing problems often makes them seem less ominous.

2. You'll get a quick lift by doing something nice for yourself, such as giving yourself a present. For a woman, it can be a new hat or hairdo; for a man, it may be only a new tie or perhaps the fishing rod you have wanted for a long time.

3. Try varying your pace, sharply altering your routine. A change of scene, even for an afternoon away from home or the office, often cures an attack.

4. Plunge into strenuous action—a fast walk, household chores, or hitting a bucketful of golf balls on a driving range. Avoid a competitive sport because defeat may only deepen your depression. Yet if you have a special skill, such as at bowling, ice skating, or golf, show your strength and prove to yourself that you have something on the ball.

5. Escape from yourself by putting your mind on a movie, a play, an absorbing novel, or a game demanding deep concentration. Artistic expression, such as painting or playing a musical instrument, may also do the trick.

6. Avoid harping on unpleasant past incidents once you realize nothing can be done about them.

7. Stop thinking of yourself as the center of the universe. Consider the problems of your fam-

ily and friends, and try to appreciate what others have done for you.

8. The most effective antidote for the blues is to give of yourself. Don't be stingy with your resources of time and effort.

9. Instead of sitting and counting your miseries, say "thank you" for what you have. In finding out your own riches, you'll realize that you're not a helpless, hopeless, cast-aside creature.

10. Looking over your life, realize that perhaps you're being selfish in demanding too much from other people or expecting the world to come to you. If you have a driving ambition and want to run the show, you've got to accept full responsibility along with the disappointments. If you prefer passivity, you'll have to give in to others.

11. Stay away from pep pills. Taking such stimulants only means that you're depending on a crutch when actually you have ample emotional reserves within you.

FINALLY, remember that your low-down mood is self-limiting, healed by the passage of time. Your emotions are remarkably resilient so that by tomorrow you'll have bounced back from the blues of today. But if these remedies don't work, consider getting psychiatric help, especially if you increasingly continue to feel depressed.

A little touch of sadness now and then seems to be a common human need. The popularity of blues singers, for example, is an index of the demand for this mood.

Your low spirits are not something unique. In fact, brilliant men and women are most subject to dejection, so you're in good company. Why not relax, confident that you can banish your blues with just a little effort?

COVER:

There's good reason for the big, bright smile of our cover girl, photographed by Arthur Schatz. She has already seen the new beachwear fashions on page 14.

Family Weekly

April 23, 1961

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Send all advertising communications to Family Weekly, 153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to Family Weekly, 60 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

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