

Learn to live with your moods

Did you wake up smiling or snarling this morning? Jot down your feelings and begin plotting your "mood cycle"—a chart to smoother sailing in life

By FRANK P. THOMAS

HOW ARE YOU feeling today? That's not a polite, meaningless question this time. The answer, plus answers in the days to come, can help you chart a happier, better-adjusted life.

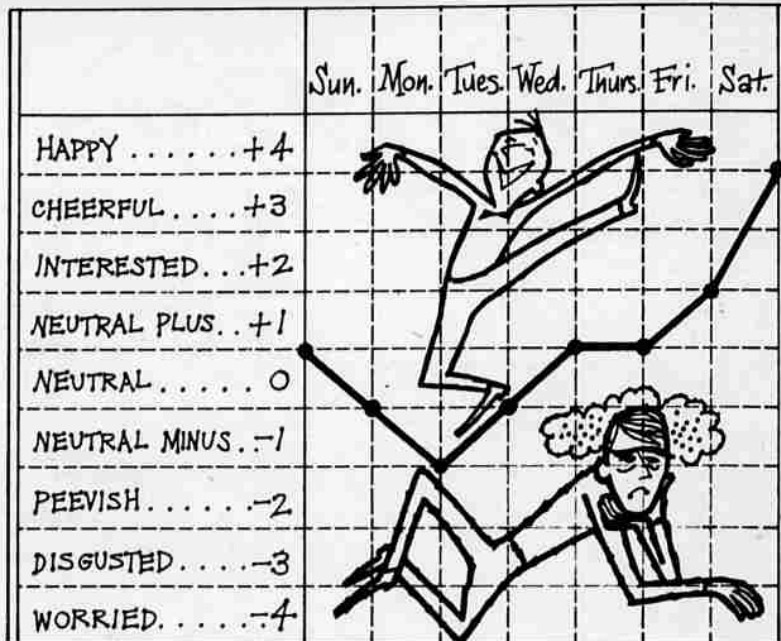
Dr. Rexford B. Hersey, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist who for years has investigated the emotional ups and downs of workers for large corporations, has discovered a "mood cycle" which is as inevitable in each of us as the changing tides of the ocean.

For example, if you're feeling like an unloved child in the big, cold world, take heart; in three or four weeks, your depression blues will have faded, and life will take on a rosy hue. These ups and downs can be charted for each individual in predictable rhythms. Neither the joys nor storms of life can upset their regular swing for very long.

About 60 percent of the people studied by Dr. Hersey had a cycle that traveled from one low to the next in 33 to 35 days. Others ranged from two to nine weeks.

A breakdown of the average person's cycle might look like this: one week or more, flying high; two-and-a-half weeks, pretty chipper; two days, no complaints; and three or four days, in the dumps.

Probably you've already realized how this discovery can help you. If you learn when to expect your normal ups and downs, you can adjust your living accordingly. You can learn to ride out the depressions and make the high spots work more efficiently for you.



DRAWING BY WES MCKEOWN

Mid-afternoon is a good time to rate yourself. Be candid in your self-analysis. Don't record how you think you *should* feel, but how you *really* feel. And don't compare yourself with the previous day. Try asking yourself: "How's my sense of humor?" . . . "Did

I sleep well last night?" . . . "Am I interested in what I am doing?" Dr. Hersey suggests men rate themselves for at least six months, women for a year. Don't expect your cycle to span precisely the same period. It can vary as much as a week either way.

Here are some tips on how to live with your moods, once you've charted your cycle as explained in the accompanying chart:

1. Don't let moods worry you. "Moods are nature's way of winding us up like a clock," Dr. Hersey explains. "She intends us, if we are to have a good life, to have our highs counterbalanced by our lows. The lows are for our protection. It is during lows that we recharge our batteries."

When you plot your own moods, you will find that, although we tend to magnify our lows, they account for only 10 percent of the cycle. Actually we enjoy life much more than we think and should remember the long periods of lightheartedness rather than the short periods of despondency.

2. Take low spirits in your stride. Since gloomy periods are nature's way of slowing us down to revitalize us, why not cooperate? One of man's most time-honored methods of renewing himself is to pray and visit a house of worship. Women may take time out to buy a hat, too. Some men may spend an evening with "the boys." A warm bath and soft music may soothe others. In each case, you'll notice, the person slows down with his emotions; he does not fight them and create the inevitable tensions.

3. When feeling high or low, don't make any decisions. In our down moods, we tend to magnify unimportant troubles. On the other hand, the overconfidence of high spirits sometimes leads us to bold actions we later regret. Obviously, neither

time is good for irrevocable decisions. The long period between is when your judgment is best balanced.

4. Make your cycles work for you. Once you know what to expect from your emotions, key your daily routines to their ebb and flow. An insurance salesman, for example, scheduled his heaviest prospect calls for the period when he knew his emotions were high. During low periods, he confined himself to the office, catching up on paper work. Result: a 22 percent increase in sales.

Mood cycles can be even more important in personal relationships. Some husbands and wives have charted their cycles and learned that marriage is smoother with self-knowledge. The wife who knows her husband is in the doldrums can facilitate an upswing with a special meal or by sparing him the latest household crisis. And when she's moody, he can brighten her life with dinner out and, say, a good movie.

5. Remember, others have cycles, too. You're not the only one who suffers gray days, so why not be more tolerant of others' foibles? When you hold back a sharp retort or stinging criticism—even if it's deserved—you make life more bearable for others, and more rewarding for yourself.

Keeping these general suggestions in mind, why don't you chart your own mood cycle now? You'll learn a good deal about yourself and the life you live. And you'll find that you like both much more than you thought you did.

COVER:

As Arthur Sarnoff amusingly illustrates, some golf enthusiasts have met up with a pretty impasse and seem as indecisive as Mother Nature concerning their next move.

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