

Look for that mate who can "Fight well"

If they've tried to, then it explains why they're able to espouse such theories. They've all been single for years.

Weir's View

By Ian Weir
Thomson News Service

Just when you think you're finally starting to understand a few things about relationships, along come the psychologists to pull the rug out from under you.

According to an article in none other than The New York Times, a new study has just concluded that fighting is good for marriages.

Well. Let me be honest. As a male, two questions spring instantly to mind when I read that psychologists are claiming something like this.

Question one: are these psychologists kidding? Question two: are these psychologists women?

Like all men, I have spent my adult life trying to avoid arguments with women. There are two reasons for this.

For starters, the man is at a great disadvantage in any arguments with his mate, since he is almost invariably the wronged and innocent party.

This is not - let me hasten to add - just a personal bias. All of my male friends say exactly the same thing. And they wouldn't lie to me.

The second huge problem is that arguments put a much greater physiological strain on the man than on the woman.

This is a scientific fact. Apparently, the male experiences a vastly greater adrenalin reaction in times of stress because of his ancient fight-or-flight programming - the programming that was developed way back when men were out hunting large prehistoric animals.

I once tried to explain this to Dear Heart. "I hate arguing with you," I explained, "because it triggers ancestral memories of ram-paging woolly mammoths."

Funnily enough, this didn't seem to help matters much.

In any case, here we are - left with this psychological study which proclaims that the happiest couples are those who are able to confront and resolve their differences by "fighting well."

Right off the bat, I have a large problem with this. I have never included "fights well" on the list of virtues I look for in a mate. This is just one of the many reasons I have never proposed to Sugar Ray Leonard.

But the psychologists insist that the problem with many relationships is that one or both partners have poor fighting strategies. Particularly destructive, they say, are arguments in which one partner "becomes defensive or stubborn, or whines or withdraws."

I have even larger problems with this one - since they've just summarized my entire game-plan.

When arguments arise, I get defensive and stubborn. Then I whine and withdraw. Occasionally, I change the order - whine first, and get stubborn later. And now they tell me I can't do this.

Instead, the psychologists recommend a three-stage strategy for constructive arguing. As the fight begins, they say, it is essential that "one partner at least partly acknowledge the other's point of view."

Well, okay. No man would dispute this. It's an excellent idea if the woman starts off by acknowledging the man's point of view. From here, she can easily proceed to make a full confession that she's being horrible and unfair, and that he's practically perfect in every way.

But at stage two, the psychologists' theory falls apart

completely. When the argument gets heated, they claim, it's important that "one partner accurately 'mind-reads', saying how the other is feeling about the issue."

This, of course, is insane. No man has ever read a woman's mind accurately, and only utter fools make the attempt.

When your mate confronts you with the statement that something is bothering her, the only hope is to look blank and stupid. Never hazard the guess that she may be worried about the clutch on the Datsun.

And if the psychologists believe that minds should be read at stage two, then their third recommendation - that the partners wind down the dispute by agreeing to a compromise - is simply pointless.

Quite frankly, the whole thing raises a fascinating question. Do these psychologists actually conduct their own marital arguments

this way?

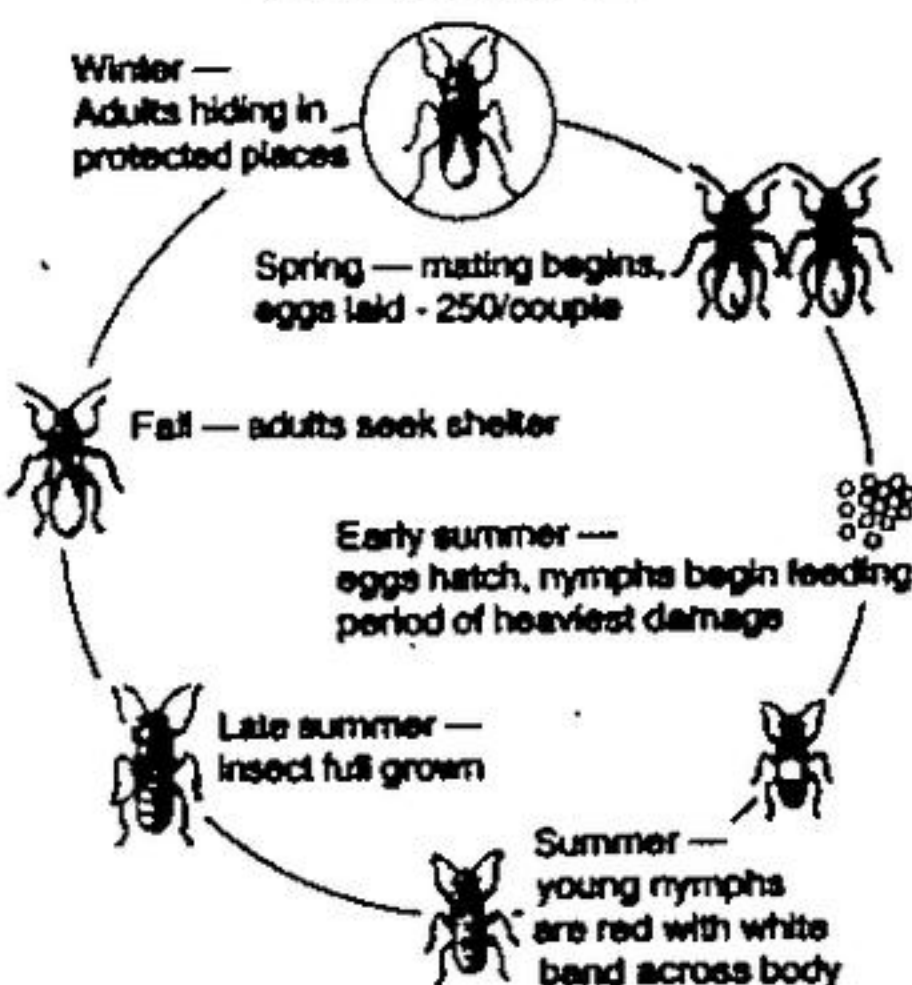
Professional Advice from the Professionals . . .

Chinch Bugs can destroy your lawn with little warning.

Chinch Bugs are small insects which live in and feed on lawn grasses. They live above the soil and feed on living grass plants by means of a piercing mouthpart called a stylet. The insect inserts its stylet into the leaves, stems or crowns and sucks the juices out of the plant. The damage looks quite similar to drought symptoms. People mistakenly assume that the lawn needs only water to restore its lush green appearance.



LIFE CYCLE



CHINCH BUGS look like this at various stages of development. The newly hatched infant or nymph goes through a total change in appearance from youth to adult.

CONTROL

Recognize the difference between a simple drought problem and a serious chinch bug infestation. Only government approved materials that are applied carefully and precisely at the correct time are the most effective in controlling this serious lawn pest. If you see suspicious brown patches starting to appear in the lawn DON'T HESITATE. Call a professional and he will inspect your property FREE OF CHARGE! If you do have chinch bugs he can protect your investment in your property by promptly treating the problem. If your brown patches are due to lack of water he can advise you on correct watering procedures.

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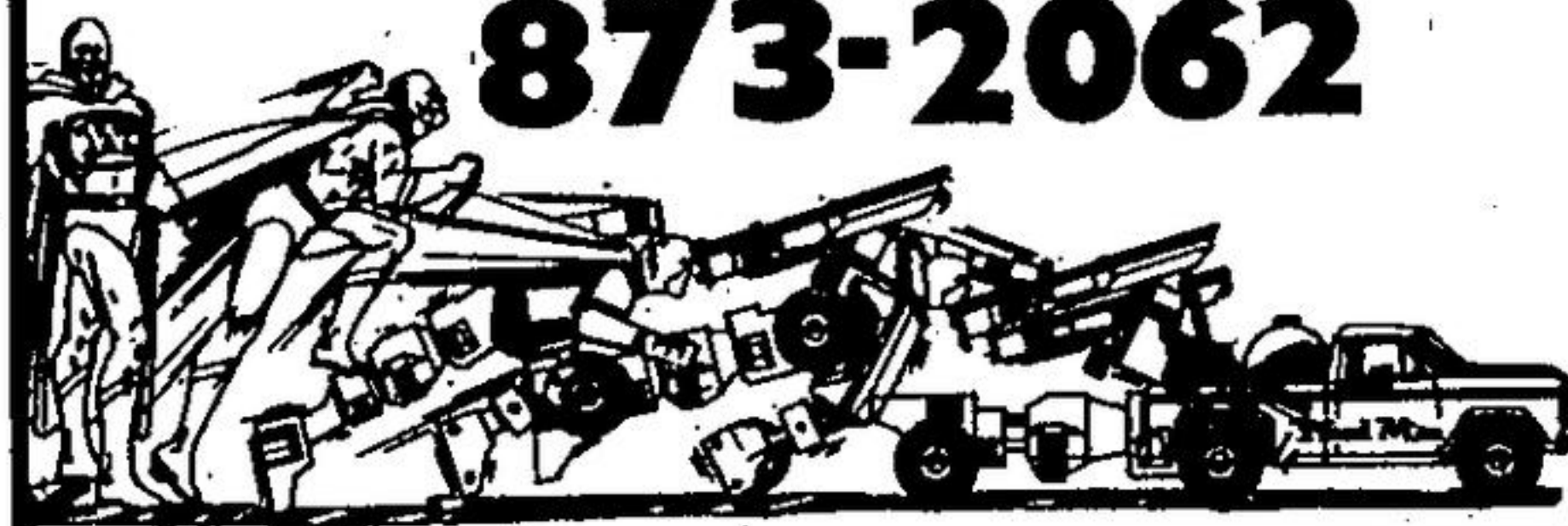
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