

Opinion

The bright side of boredom

Ennui. It's a happening thing. It's the now feeling, spruced up for the 1990s and available in handy, easy-to-use doses, suitable for any lifestyle.

Anyone can indulge. It's cheap and easily accessible. Ennui is best experienced alone, with time on your hands.

Every now and then I gather with a few of my friends; boredom, depression, weariness and listless apathy, and just get a fix on where we all stand. After a day, maybe two, we go our separate ways not to meet for weeks and sometimes months.

It's strange, however, that whenever my busy schedule gives me a break and things slow down, ennui is there ushering in that same tired group of malcontents and misfits for another visit.

But I could never banish them, nor would I want to.

Everyone competes, in things from sports to jobs, schools to lifestyles. It seems the same charmed bunch always wins. So why do people keep competing?

They keep at it because winning feels so good, because it is positive and rare. But winning is no fun unless you temper it with losing. In fact it becomes a chore.

An enjoyable existence needs to be tempered with episodes of despair, those periods of listlessness and weariness, where every moment seems to plod on and on and on.

Without that, who could enjoy a good mood? So enter, my fine feelings of ennui. Come in, render my books boring, treat all music as passe and dull, chase away all thoughts of heroic tales and spirit-lifting deeds. Then leave, because those companions of mine will want to return to a place where they will be most welcome, without your taint.



**Reaume
With a View**
with BRAD REAUME

I remember an old *Twilight Zone* television show with Jack Klugman (he was in zillions of them) as a gambler. He died in the show and in his new home he started to gamble and won. Then he won again, and again.

Soon he was taking larger and larger risks and winning bigger and bigger. He thought he was in heaven, but alas, the show faded to black with Klugman realizing that winning all the time was hell.

It had a nice tv touch even if it was replayed Greek mythology with a modern twist. Klugman always had that great "I've been had" face. The ancient Greeks had a real feel for stuff like that. (So did Rod Serling). Those Greek gods did things to people that were downright sadistic, especially when the whole ennui thing got to them.

This is the downside to ennui. But properly controlled, ennui can be a great obverse side of the coin of life.

Hey! The Queen's picture is pretty boring stuff, in that I've seen it countless thousands of times (I collect pennies) but the design on the other side is fresh and interesting. Remember, perspective.

Of course the new-look crown makes the 1990 version of the Queen pretty darn exciting. So perhaps ennui takes a holiday, at least until the Queen's picture becomes old hat.



Spring cleaning for your dog

I don't believe it. The sun is shining, birds are singing, flowers are blooming, dogs' coats are... Well, revolting is the word that comes to mind.

It isn't that you haven't looked after the coat through the winter. It's just that, because spring is really here and you see your dog in the bright sunshine, you know he needs work, maybe a lot of work.

If your dog is a terrier, poodle, spaniel or toy breed, you're probably used to having him or her groomed professionally at regular intervals. This is necessary in many cases so you can tell one end from the other. I remember my old Pomeranian and can speak from experience.

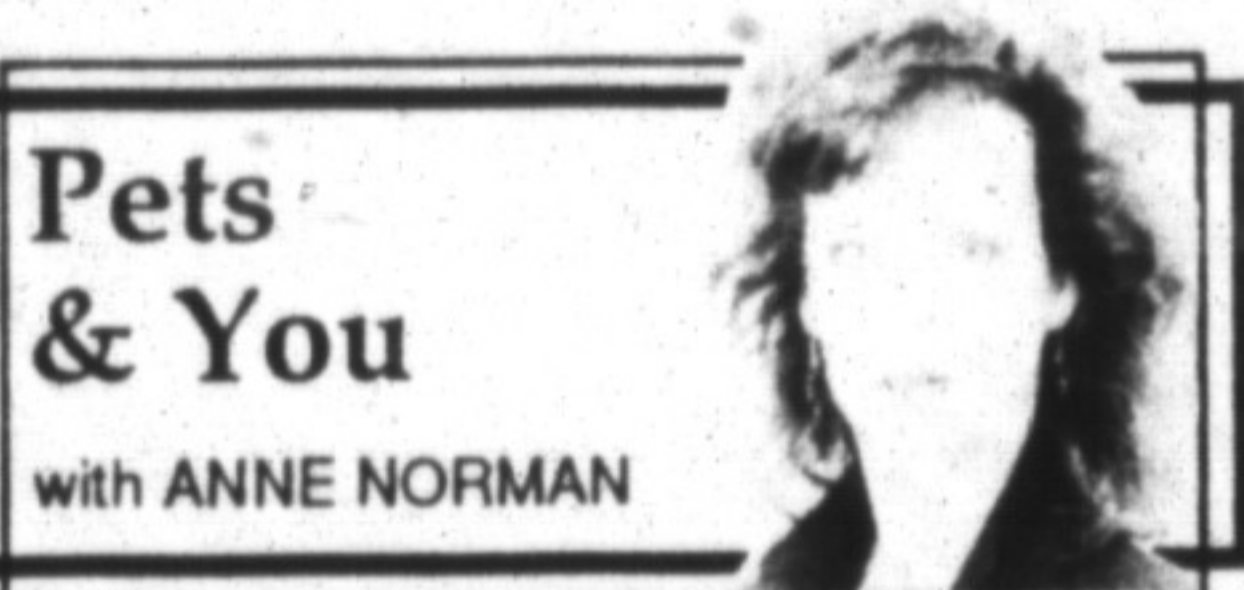
All dogs will benefit from a good spring cleaning, no matter what type or mixture they happen to be. Any dog whose coat is longer than an inch or so will have dead or matted hair that needs to be removed. Not only is there the likelihood of dry, flaking skin, the smell may be something less than appealing.

If you own a long-coated dog of small to medium size, you can probably wash him in your bathtub or laundry tub. A hose attachment is very useful for the rinsing and double rinsing required to get every last bit of soap out of the coat.

One of the most important things to remember when grooming your dog is that you must, no matter how tedious it is, brush out all the mats and tangles before you wet the coat. If you don't do this, you'll end up cutting a large chunk of fur off your dog later.

When bathing your dog, wet the head first and work back along the body. Avoid getting water in your dog's ears. Put some cotton batting in them if you're nervous. Wet the coat thoroughly, rubbing it the wrong way to soak the skin. Dilute your shampoo with water ahead of time so that you can work up a good lather right away.

Rub the lather in well, right down to the skin, checking for any skin problems or fleas. Look at that water, it's filthy!



**Pets
& You**
with ANNE NORMAN

Rinse, lather again, all the time telling your dog how truly wonderful he is, then rinse thoroughly, adding a little diluted cream rinse if you like.

Towel your dog's head dry and remove him from the tub. You'll probably get soaked anyway, as your dog enjoys a tremendous shake to get the water off his coat.

Towel dry as much as possible, then blow with a hair dryer if your dog is accustomed to this. Otherwise, let him dry naturally (indoors, unless it's very warm outside) and brush him out afterwards. Looks like a different dog, doesn't he?

Sometimes the wear and tear on your nerves makes even the idea of bathing your dog too horrible to contemplate. Consider having your dog washed and pampered by a professional groomer.

A good groomer is worth her weight in gold (I'm not being sexist, groomers are usually women). To find one, talk to friends and neighbours who have their dogs groomed. Referral is by far the best method of finding a groomer who will treat your dog the way you would treat him yourself.

When your dog comes home from the groomer, he should be happy as well as clean. In the case of a dog requiring shaving, his skin should be free of nicks and razor burn. Nails should be cut and the dog should look and smell terrific.

Okay, now we're ready for summer. Our dogs have had their heartworm exams, tested negative and are taking their medication faithfully. They're healthy and look great. Relax and get out the barbecue. Summer's here.

Taking loneliness out on themselves

Alice had seen her physician 29 times in the last six months. She had an incredible list of complaints — general aches and pains, nausea, fatigue, constipation, dyspnea, laboured breathing, menstrual irregularities, dizziness, head and back pains, to name a few.

Previous tests (blood work-ups, x-rays, a spinal tap, a CAT scan) revealed no physical causes for the complaints. Alice had Briquet's Syndrome.

A person with Briquet's Syndrome is very similar to a hypochondriac. The hypochondriac is preoccupied with a fear of having a specific and serious physical disease, and sees all aches and pains as confirmation of it.

Someone with Briquet's Syndrome is more concerned with the general aches and pains themselves than an underlying or specific disease.

The important thing about both cases, however, is that the aches and pains are either imaginary or greatly exaggerated. In neither case, however, is the patient pretending. They really feel overcome by their aches and pains.

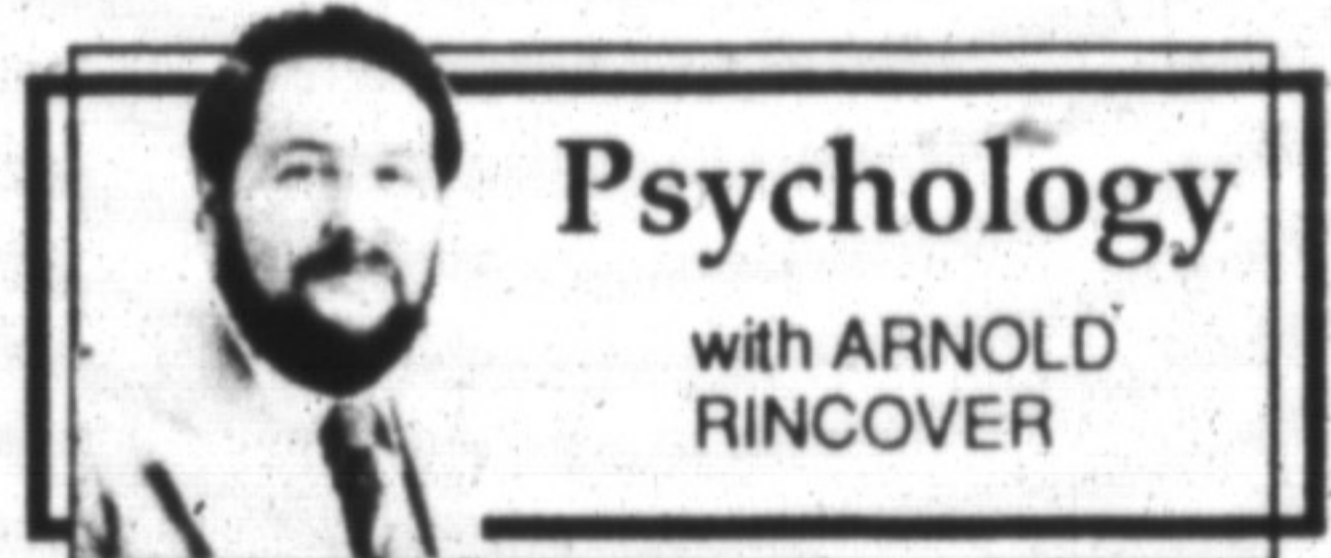
Hypochondriasis (I will not differentiate it here from Briquet's Syndrome) is more common in women than men.

It seems to run in families. About 20 per cent of immediate relatives of a hypochondriac will also have the disorder. It occurs less often in better-educated people, who presumably have more sophistication and non-medical explanations for their problems.

It is most common in the elderly; with elderly women the chief victims.

Does this mean that women are truly the weaker sex? That women are by nature more prone to imaginary ills? No, not necessarily. Little is known about the causes of hypochondriasis, yet we do know that it is often associated with depression.

Since women live longer than men, and women are often younger than the men they marry, the fact is the average woman can ex-



Psychology
with ARNOLD RINCOVER

pect to outlive her mate. Consequently she will be alone, and probably more lonely and depressed than the average man. Perhaps this is why hypochondriasis is most common in elderly women.

Why does hypochondriasis occur? One notion is that the present generation of senior citizens was brought up in a time when it was difficult to talk about emotional or psychological problems.

Physical ailments were more acceptable. Consequently, the language they use now is physical. They don't say their feelings are hurt because their son doesn't visit. Rather, they can't sleep and their joints ache.

If this explanation is true, then watch out for the next generation of hypochondriacs.

Since it is now much more acceptable to discuss emotional or psychological problems, even fashionable in some quarters to 'have a shrink', what does that suggest about hypochondriasis in 2015?

Instead of complaining about aching joints, will it be an aching id? Will we talk about manic phases and complexes instead of physical complaints? Will the best sellers be *The Joy of Repression* and *The Insight Doctor*?

For now, most agree we should keep hypochondriacs mentally and physically active — help them find friends and activities they enjoy.

When they are preoccupied with minor aches, try to distract them and refocus on the positive aspects of their lives. A therapist should be consulted to help tailor a specific treatment plan.



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