

Opinion

I need a change of scenery

I need a trip, a change of scenery, a new vista to discover, a chance to broaden my horizons.

Day tripping to Guelph just doesn't do it for me anymore. A quick saunter into the bowels of Toronto has lost its glitter. I don't know what's come over me, but seeing homeless people sleeping on sewer grates has lost its keen sense of the bizarre. It's lost its spark. Toronto requires intestinal fortitude that I can't muster.

I used to jog the streets at 3 a.m. Now I'm afraid to take a shortcut.

In an attempt to spur my sense of adventure, my freewheeling, anything-goes lifestyle, I guess I could try taking a different route to work. In order to live life with abandon each and every day I could vary my other daily routines. Yeah.

Whew, I'm talking about instituting major environmental changes in my life. But I think they need to be even more radical.

Perhaps a simple change of the earth's axis, say, 90 degrees south? That might do the trick. Wouldn't it be nice if Hawaii was at the North Pole? Sure would be a different world, especially for Newfoundlanders.

Just think of all the changes. Los Angeles would be at about the same latitude as Tuktoyaktuk is now. The best part is, so would Tuktoyaktuk. All the investment properties Canadians bought in Florida? Still there, warm, wonderful and still awash in cheap booze.

Europe would be positively balmy. Minsk, a hot spot, a playground for the rich and famous. Greece and the Riviera? Still the European fun spots they've always been.

What do we lose? Tibet is a little cooler, more like, say, Antarctica. Don't worry, the Dalai Lama has left already. It's a little cool in northern India, like Kashmir's not cold enough?

Hawaii and some south seas islands would be a touch frost bound, but that's okay. We'd gain valuable insights on Antarctica itself and Greenland. Are they single land masses or a



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number of islands overlaid with icecaps? Hey, wanna know.

When do we really gain? Most things remain the same. Europe is warmer, granted, but that's good. Africa is still a steaming quiltwork of cultures, so the leftist sociologists are happy. Australia is still remote and has the same basic climate. Los Angeles is wiped from the map. So the Dodgers have to move back to Brooklyn, that's not bad.

I like this idea more and more. I wonder if I could pull it off? Should I look in the paper under mad scientists? There is a solid body of evidence that this thing happened in the past. For real.

It might happen again. It could be time to invest in that Godthaab summer home you've always dreamed of. Perhaps a little cottage on the water near Scapa Flow. It's not so pleasant right now, but with the Cold War over and a little twist in the earth's axis, residential land values could soar.

I guess I shouldn't bank on massive changes in climate to keep me interested. In the absence of a radical shift in the earth's axis I could go to Los Angeles to shake up my moribund existence.

I've always wanted to go to California. Unfortunately, California has always wanted to go north. It'd be just my luck to have California finally succeed moments after I touched down. Or I'd be in Reno, Nevada, hear a rumble in the earth and find myself on the coast.



Personalities and obedience school

Is that a new dog walking beside you? Nope, I recognize that lopsided canine grin — it's Ralphie!

As a matter of fact, you have a grin on your face, too. Obedience school must be agreeing with you.

Walking politely on the leash, and sitting, again politely, whenever you come to a halt has not altered Ralphie's personality one bit. The twinkle is still in his eye and the tail is wagging just as happily. Obviously, you chose a really good school, one employing positive training methods and emphasizing the importance of happy understanding between dog and handler.

Do you remember way back, when we were still waiting for Ralphie to be born? Even though this was to be your first dog, you were determined to get a male puppy. No amount of friendly persuasion or common sense could change your mind.

Well, now that you're getting into the pre-adolescent stage, you're witnessing some of the male-type training problems we've discussed before.

My favourite way of describing the general behaviour differences between male and female (and this is general, there are some very aggressive females and some very co-operative males) is as follows:

Take a female dog, ask her to do something and show her, plainly, what it is you expect. Be very happy and positive.

She does her best to understand and to make you happy. "Like this?" she asks, ears back and tail down.

When you tell her what a good dog she is, she practically turns cartwheels of happiness.

Even if she doesn't get it right away, she'll likely try to understand what it is you want and keep on trying until you reach a mutually acceptable compromise.



**Pets
& You**
with ANNE NORMAN

A male, on the other hand, waits until you've patiently shown him, for the fourth time, what it is that you want. Then he skips directly to the cartwheels.

"What?" he asks, wagging his tail and licking you, or trying to untie your shoelaces.

Patiently, you show him again. He looks the other way. "What?" he asks, "Are you talking to me?"

You show him again. "Oh," he says, "You want me to do that." He thinks for a second, then asks, "Why?"

You show him again. "Oh, all right," he grumbles, "If it means that much to you." He performs the exercise, once, then says, "Geez, I'm glad that's over, let's do something fun now."

Of all the dogs I've had, only one female has ever pulled the "Geez, I'm too busy for this" play outlined above, and this was a large terrier of a breed not noted for its co-operative qualities.

All dogs are going to question you but a male will challenge you every step of the way. Remember, he doesn't necessarily want to be the boss, he's just checking to make sure that you really deserve to be.

Keep your sense of humour at all times when training. If you feel your patience slipping, finish on a simple exercise the dog knows well, and leave the lesson to another day.

Congratulations! You're doing great, you and Ralphie. Keep up the good work.

IQ linked to family environment

A new study claims that IQ and competence in children are at least 50 per cent determined by certain "risk factors" during infancy.

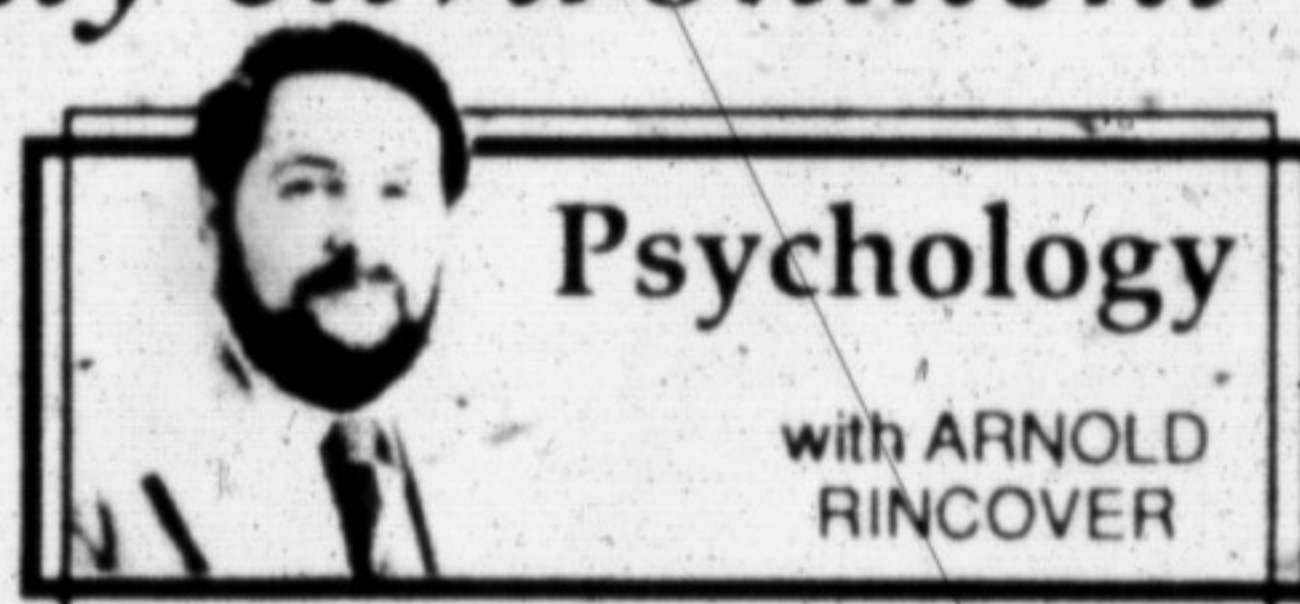
Rhode Island researchers Ronald Seifer, at Brown University, and Arnold Sameroff, at Bradley Hospital, claim that their list of risk factors is twice as accurate as any other IQ prediction tool.

The ongoing study began in 1970 and followed hundreds of children from birth through adolescence. Each child was given a risk score, based upon the number of risk factors present in the family. The possible risk factors are as follows:

- The mother has a history of mental illness;
- The mother has serious anxiety;
- The mother has rigid attitudes, beliefs and values concerning her child's development;
- There are few positive interactions between mother and child during infancy;
- The head of the household has a semi-skilled occupation;
- The mother didn't go to high school;
- The child is a visible minority member;
- The father does not live with the family;
- The family has had at least 20 stressful events during the first four years;
- There are four or more children in the family.

Multiple risk factors were a better predictor of a child's IQ and competence at four years of age than any other child characteristic. Moreover, according to the authors, each risk factor reduced the child's IQ score by about four points.

Children with no environmental risks obtained IQ scores more than 30 points higher than children with seven or eight risk factors.



Psychology
with ARNOLD RINCOVER

The IQ levels fell from 115 with no risk factors to about 80 in children with seven or eight risk factors. Importantly, the authors also found that these risk factors were still accurate evaluation tools even when children reached 13 years of age.

In general, the authors report that parents who are "flexible" in their beliefs and values about child development have children who do better.

Rigidity, for example, may be thinking that a child who has problems at birth will continue to have problems during development, while the flexible parent would believe that the problems may be temporary and the child may turn out just fine.

Flexibility, however, does not mean permissiveness. Flexible parents believe rules are conditions that cannot be broken, yet they express the reasons for the rules and are open to negotiation.

We must realize, however, that these risk factors do not really "cause" a lowering of IQ. They are, simply, related to certain problems that may occur. For example, a parent's lack of high school education may really mean that parent doesn't read enough to their child. Encouraging the parent to read more to the child may help to eliminate this risk factor.



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