

# DEALING WITH EMOTIONAL TURMOIL

BY CHRIS TRABER  
Staff Writer

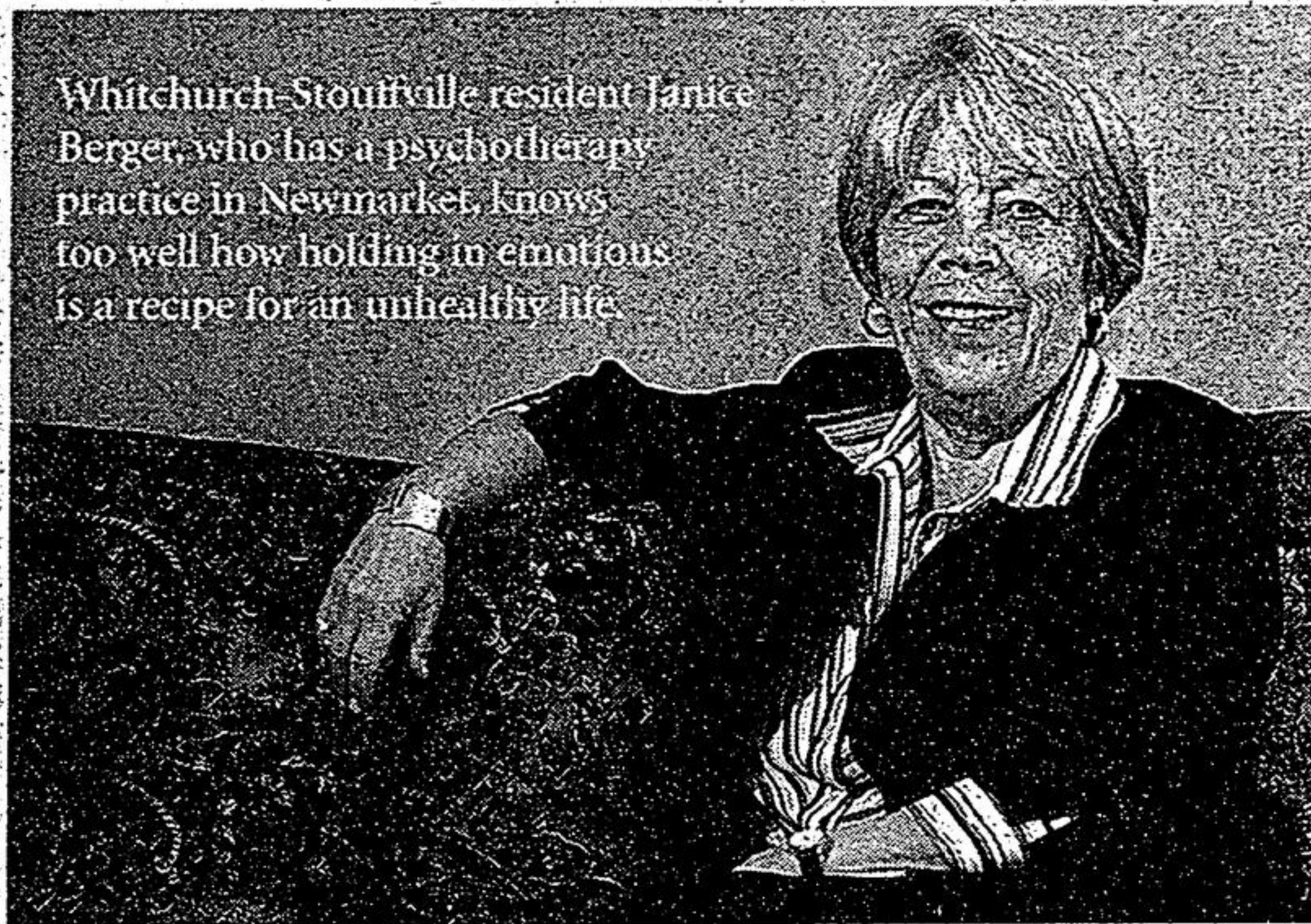
In an era when people seek emotional healing via mass media dispensation of TV's Dr. Phil and bestseller lists perennially include self-help books, it doesn't take a genius to figure society is reaching out.

Few, however, are actually grasping meaningful solutions. So confirms the recent Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health where researchers say depression is almost pandemic and Canada ranks high in adolescent suicide.

The forum revealed studies indicating large numbers of North American children — so-called silent sufferers — are never properly diagnosed or treated for mental, behavioural or developmental disorders.

We eventually journey from childhood, but life's unfinished and often grievous business gets packed in the baggage. Repressed feelings, harboured pain and denied emotional injuries keep many people's psyches as dark and closed as banks on Sunday.

We are, to our detriment, emotional pack rats, unable or unwill-



Whitchurch-Stouffville resident Janice Berger, who has a psychotherapy practice in Newmarket, knows too well how holding in emotions is a recipe for an unhealthy life.

STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

ing to challenge, experience and release our traumas, says Newmarket psychotherapist Janice Berger.

We also have the means to let go of what's holding us emotionally hostage and win back our serenity, she adds.

She knows only too well. She has been there.

Born in Saskatoon and relocated to Toronto at two, Ms Berger trained as a nurse at Wellesley

Hospital and Vancouver General as a young woman.

While out west, she upgraded her skills with a two-year diploma from the University of British Columbia.

Missing her family, she returned to Wellesley, teaching medical and surgical nursing.

Her academic wanderlust led her to McGill University in Montreal and a degree in psychiatric nursing. There, she met her

husband. Marriage and children replaced the career.

At 29, 36 hours before giving birth to her second child, a plane crash claimed the life of her brother, Ron.

"Ten years later, I began to say goodbye," she recounts.

"Ron was my only sibling, but I didn't have time to grieve. I missed the visitation and the funeral, the sharing of experience through talk and touch that would have helped me begin to heal."

Her time was filled with caring for a new baby and another 17-month-old child, helping her parents cope and supporting her husband, who assumed her brother's business.

"There was no time for me," she said.

Her brother's death was stored in an emotional attic along with other muffled anguish.

As a young girl, her beloved grandfather died. A cousin was killed in combat, another taken prisoner of war. A family friend was killed in a practice maneuver. At 17, a dear friend died in a motorcycle accident.

"Although it was acknowledged that I might have troublesome feelings about these events, my family

did not give me the room and support to feel and express my feelings. I did know I needed to feel so much more so I shut down my feelings and just carried on."

The opening of her emotional life came through her desire to be a good parent, she says.

"My early traumas had begun to reveal themselves in telling moments with my children," Ms Berger recalls.

*We are, to our detriment, emotional pack rats, unable or unwilling to challenge, experience and release our traumas.*

"I would be irritable but would not understand why."

Her own process of self-help began in earnest.

She learned about labelling feelings to express them through Thomas Gordon's *Parent Effectiveness Training*.

Reading Arthur Janov allowed her to acknowledge her overreac-

See CONSUMERISM, page 25.

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