

The Newsletter of THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF STRESS

Number 1

1991

3rd International Congress on Stress Montreux, Switzerland, February 17-20, 1991

The Third International Congress on Stress will feature state-of-the-art presentations on Stress and Cardiovascular Disease; Stress, Emotions and Health; Mechanisms Mediating the Salubrious Benefits of Social Support Systems and Positive Emotions; Biobehavioral Effects of Electromagnetic Energy: (Clinical Results in Insomnia, Depression, Addictive Disorders, etc.), Stress, Immune System Function and Cancer, Job Stress: (Causes, Health Effects, Medico-legal Implications, Remedies) and much much more. A distinguished and truly international faculty. This meeting has been expanded to provide papers and interactive discussion sessions in the morning, with a variety of interesting workshops in the afternoon. Unbelievably attractive rates for registrants and traveling companions at the elegant Five Star Hotel Excelsior with its spectacular views of the French and Swiss Alps, gourmet dining, swimming pool, beauty salon, massage parlor, sauna and world renowned Biotonus Clinic offering a variety of rejuvenation therapies. Special air fares available. A unique opportunity for shopping, skiing, sightseeing trips to nearby attractions, etc. Attendance is strictly limited and reservations should be made as early as possible to guarantee participation and educational credits. For further information, call (914) 963-1200 or FAX (914) 965-6267 or write to Conference Department, The American Institute of Stress, 124 Park Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703.

More Links Between Anger And High Cholesterol

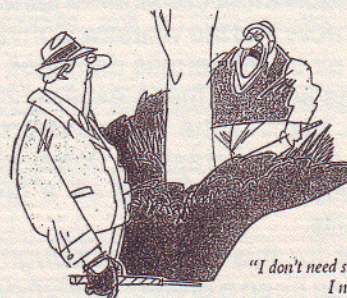
A new study reported at a recent meeting of The American Heart Association disclosed that teenagers who are hostile are much more likely to have elevated cholesterol twenty years later. The researchers followed 830 students who had taken personality tests as teenagers 20-25 years previously. Those who scored high on a hostility subscale of the MMPI had the highest levels of total cholesterol in their blood as well as lower amounts of HDL or "good cholesterol." It is postulated that anger is

associated with an increased secretion of adrenalin and other stress-related hormones. These break down fat stores, releasing them into the blood stream, and causing elevation of cholesterol and other fatty substances. In another report of almost 1,000 men who had been followed for 8-10 years, it was found that those who reacted to emotionally arousing situations with strong anger were much more likely to die of sudden death due to cardiac arrest.

Palm Beach Post, 11/14/90

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*"I don't need stress management and biofeedback.
I need eagles and birdies."*

For further information on the original source of abstracts and other reprints available on similar subjects, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Reprint Division, American Institute of Stress, 124 Park Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10703.

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The Newsletter of
**THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF
 STRESS**

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Stress Goes to the Supreme Court

A Miami accountant was flying the 25-minute hop to his annual Bahama vacation with his 11-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter, and as the plane neared Nassau, it began to buck violently, and the pilot announced that engine failure would force their return to Miami. But in a few minutes the other two engines had stopped, the jet was gliding and passengers were advised that "ditching is imminent." Although the plane landed safely, the "10 minutes of sheer terror" prompted the accountant and a dozen other passengers to sue Eastern Airlines for emotional distress. Now, seven years later, the Supreme Court must consider whether a lower court ruled correctly that the Warsaw Convention on international air travel permits damages for psychological injuries such as those experienced in the Miami mishap. Many of the 184 survivors of last year's United Airlines crash in Iowa also included psychological stress claims as a chief portion of their lawsuits.

The legal precedent for this is hazy although in recent years, there has been a greater tendency to give awards to individuals who have not suffered any physical harm, but merely claimed unusual mental trauma. A recent book, "Recovering for Psychological Injuries," emphasizes the increased trend to recognize "posttraumatic stress disorders" as bona fide or legitimate reactions to disturbing situations. In general, "emotional stress" awards are modest, averaging \$25,000 to \$50,000. However,

defendants are concerned that this will open large new areas of liability which could bankrupt manufacturers of toxic materials like asbestos or certain chemicals. Workers are increasingly suing for lifetime medical testing benefits because of concerns that exposure to toxic materials could harm their immune systems. A Federal Appeals Court upheld the \$207,000 verdict to five individuals in Tennessee who feared becoming ill after a chemical firm contaminated ground water. And, as noted previously in the Newsletter, a court awarded \$5 million to Mark Christian, Rock Hudson's lover, for stress due to learning that the actor had AIDS.

There does appear to be some backlash. A Texas Appeals Court voided a half-million-dollar verdict won by a divorcing wife, who charged that her husband subjected her to "emotional terrorism." In New York, a lawyer was fined \$10,000 for filing what was considered to be a frivolous suit on behalf of a woman who feared becoming ill, after visiting a hotel where asbestos was being removed. As one expert queried, "Can we sue a driver who almost hit us? Where does it stop?" While the Supreme Court has been conservative on social issues and criminal law, it has done little to limit the generous personal injury awards upheld by lower courts, and the verdict on the Eastern Airlines suit is eagerly awaited.

U.S. News and World Report, 11-5-90

A truth that's told with bad intent beats all the lies you can invent.

William Blake

Men Take Family Stress To Work

That was the title of a recent *USA Today* article which reported that working women are superior to men in keeping their family problems at home. One hundred sixty-six working couples kept separate diaries for six weeks. Both sexes felt that they were overworked one or two work days each week and work problems often spilled over into their home life. However, wives more often pitched in for their husbands than vice versa, and were also much less likely to take family problems to work and subsequently pick fights or become irritable with co-workers and customers. The researchers suggested that wives may be better at handling multiple roles because they are more likely to be involved in housework, child care, financial and other duties while raising their children.

USA Today, 11/90

Third Annual "Less Stress" Golf Tournament

The Third Annual Less Stress Golf Tournament was held at Elmwood Country Club on Thursday, September 27, 1990. In recognition of the achievements of The American Institute of Stress, Westchester County proclaimed the date to be "Less Stress Day in Westchester," and the City Council of Yonkers passed a resolution proclaiming it as "The American Institute of Stress Day" in the city of Yonkers. Handsome certificates were presented by appropriate County and City officials. The front runners for the Annual "Less Stress" Award were George Steinbrenner and Donald Trump, with the recently deposed Yankee boss winning out. However, last minute pressing Olympic Committee commitments prevented Mr. Steinbrenner from attending, and he sent the following FAX expressing his regrets.



New York Yankees

GEORGE M. STEINBRENNER III



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TAMPA, FLORIDA 33607
(813) 281-9001

Paul J. Rosch, M.D.
President
The American Institute of Stress
124 Park Avenue
Yonkers, NY 10703

September 26, 1990

Dear Paul:

Thank you for inviting me to accept one of your annual awards for those who have endured an abnormal amount of stress in the past year.

Forget the economy, the Yankees and Fay Vincent; forget the stock market and the Middle East, the shipbuilding industry and my Hardly Able Stable of slow motion racehorses, those things would hardly qualify me. But having Guido Cribari, Bill Fugazy and the other Italian Rizzuto as acquaintances for the past seventeen years, it seems should make me the number one recipient, as well as a candidate for the Cardinal's Blessing and a Congressional Medal of Honor.

I sincerely regret that the threat of having to see those three bums once again in person will keep me from being with you today.

Best wishes for a fine outing,

George M. Steinbrenner

Everything worked out just fine, since the award was given to Phil Rizzuto. He had just learned that his days as a Yankee broadcaster were over, ending his forty-year association with the team. In addition, he had again failed to be elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. During his acceptance speech, Phil explained some other reasons for his eligibility, and we all enjoyed his reminiscences about his career with the Yankees. The Less Stress Golf Tournament was co-sponsored

by The Rihga Royal Hotel in New York and again featured lavish prizes including first-class round trip air travel to Europe, front row seats for four to top Broadway shows, deluxe dinners and hotel accommodations at the best facilities in New York City, jeroboams and double magnums of fine wine, a new car, and \$10,000 cash for holes in one, etc. The event raised \$25,000 for The American Institute of Stress.

Big Brother Computer Stress

Previous articles in the Newsletter have indicated how a variety of employee activities are under surveillance, including number and length of rest-room breaks and speed in processing or replying to telephone requests for information. These and other "Big Brother" intrusions are increasing for millions of workers in airline offices, government agencies, insurance companies, mail order houses, and telephone companies, who start to feel they are working in an electronic sweatshop. Computers are often programmed for high performance goals and employees are pushed to work faster and faster to meet them, much like manufacturers speed up assembly lines. Through the telephones and computer terminals they use, the performance of workers can be watched, measured, and analyzed "in microchip detail." However, since computers measure quantity better than quality, the fastest operators are apt to reap more awards than those who actually do the best work. In addition, employers often make judgements about workers based on listening in on calls, without employees being aware of this or having any opportunity to defend themselves.

All of the above and other invasions of privacy have resulted in an increased number of stress-related emotional and physical complaints. A recent nationwide survey of telephone workers revealed that more than four out of five who were monitored had symptoms or complaints of depression compared to less than seventy percent of those who were not. More than half of monitored workers had stiff or sore wrists, in contrast to less than one out of four other workers. In 1987, the government estimated that between 6 to 10 million computer operators were regularly monitored but it is believed that the number is now closer to 20 million. This varies from the speed with which supermarket clerks can sweep a purchase over their optical scanners to telephone directory assistance operators, who are expected to find the right number in less than 25 seconds, regardless of how vague the request is. Some unions and workers are fighting back and are exploring legal means for relief. This is especially true in the airline industry, where constant fare changes create particularly severe problems. Management also recognizes the problem. When new investors took over Northwest Airlines, one of the principals agreed that "if we can't make you happy, you can't make the customer happy. So let's start treating people like family, not like slaves rowing across the ocean."

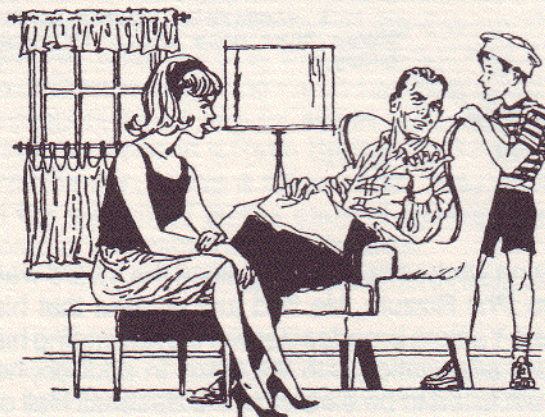
The New York Times, 12-24-90

More on the Health Benefits of Marriage

California researchers recently reported that middle age men without wives were twice as likely to die during a ten-year span than married controls. A variety of factors could account for this dramatic difference, the major one being the stress buffering effect of social support that marriage is believed to provide. They were therefore surprised to find that in their study group, those who shared living quarters with people other than a spouse, and presumably had a comparable degree of social support, had almost the same poor survival rates as those who lived alone. The worst survival rates were found primarily in men who were widowed, separated, or divorced. These mortality rates were significantly greater than those in men living alone who had never been married. This would seem to suggest that loss of an important emotional relationship may be an important factor. Other possible contributing influences such as smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity, and lack of exercise did not seem to have any significance, although poorer nutritional habits in unmarried men could play a role.

Emotional and psychosocial factors appear to be much more important in explaining these differences in death rates. The study is now utilizing a variety of questionnaires and assessments to measure loneliness, and various degrees of depression and anxiety. It will also investigate whether or not the causes of death are different and if men without wives have higher rates of suicide or fatal accidents that might be stress related. It is already clear that married men report a significantly higher level of well being and that because they are cared for by nurturing wives, they are happier. As a recent review article notes, "what better reason than that for staying alive."

Newsweek, 11-5-90



Are Stress and Emotional Loss Different in Men and Women?

Older men who lose a family member other than their wife appear to suffer much more depression and emotional stress in the following six months when compared to women of the same age. These problems are apt to be greatest in those widowers who did not belong to a church or a temple, presumably because of fewer sources of communal support. Researchers studied men and women 65 years of age or older who were enrolled in a Health Maintenance Organization. The majority of participants were healthy white married women who belonged to a church or temple. The most commonly reported family loss in the prior six months were siblings, nephews, nieces, cousins, parents, aunts and uncles. A depression questionnaire was utilized which focused on the frequency and severity of some 20 depressive symptoms during the past week. Those men who were most depressed over the recent death of a relative tended not to be married or to have any active religious affiliation. Recently bereaved widowers had the very highest depression scores. Interestingly enough, elderly widows and married women with family deaths showed little differences in depression from those who had not experienced any such loss. The only distinction that was demonstrated, however, was that depression scores were higher in married women who did not belong to any church or temple, even when compared with all women who had experienced a recent loss. The study did not ascertain how close each participant was to his or her deceased relative. However, the results suggest that an affiliation with a church or temple may provide spiritual support that somehow eases the grief of bereavement.

Science News, No. 3, 1990

"We owe a great debt of gratitude to Adam, the first great benefactor of the human race: he brought death into the world."

Mark Twain

Insomnia and Heart Attacks

Many patients with acute heart attacks report insomnia in the weeks and months prior to the event. Nearly half report waking up frequently during the preceding six months compared to an incidence of 33 percent in other hospitalized patients and only one out of four in healthy controls. These differences persist even when controlling for stimulants such as coffee and cigarette, medications, etc. Possible explanations include the greater incidence of depression and/or episodes

of nocturnal angina which are known to occur in some patients with coronary heart disease. In one study of patients with a recent heart attack who also complained of significant insomnia for two weeks or more before the event, a preponderance reported major symptoms of depression and over half actually satisfied the criteria for a major depressive episode. It is known that depression is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease and that depressed psychiatric hospital patients have higher heart attack rates than those with other mental disorders. Some suggest that the increased sympathetic tone often seen in depressed patients may contribute to this, and others believe that sleep disturbances may play an important role. It's possible that simply being awake at night and getting out of bed could precipitate silent ischemic episodes or, alternatively, that such events could cause sleep disturbances. In any event, it would appear that the diagnosis and treatment of major depression in patients at risk for heart attack may be especially important, both in reducing heart attacks and improving the overall quality of life.

Psychosomatic Medicine, Vol. 52, pp. 603-610

"The gent who wakes up and finds himself a success hasn't been asleep."

Wilson Mizner

Identifying Hypertension Due to Stress

Blood pressure measurements obtained by doctors in office settings tend to be falsely elevated. They are higher than those made by nurses or technicians, and still lower values result when readings are taken at home by family members or by the patient. Office levels vary so widely from these other recordings, that "as many as 40% of hypertensive patients may be misdiagnosed." "Even in patients with untreated, established hypertension, normal blood pressure values may be found." When such "white coat" hypertension is not recognized, it can cause the patient a great deal of stress, inconvenience and expense, as well as possible permanent harm and potential liability for the physician. In the MRFIT study, a subgroup of hypertensives receiving diuretics had higher mortality rates than untreated controls.

One way to recognize this problem is with sophisticated ambulatory monitoring equipment which measures blood pressure and heart rate continually over 24-48 hours at specified intervals. Patients can also record their symptoms and/or electrocardiograms to determine whether there is any correlation between their complaints and cardiovascular alterations.

American Heart Journal, 1988; Cardio, Sept., 1988

Stress Management Training For Medical Students

Medical school is stressful for many aspiring doctors and medical practice presents still further stresses that physicians are ill equipped to cope with. In some medical schools and hospital centers, students and house staff have established self-help programs utilizing group discussions and professional counseling to help them learn how to deal with stress. Now there are attempts to address the problem in the very first year of medical school. One report evaluated the effects of stress management training on first- and second-year medical students, comparing 29 in an experimental group, and an equal number of controls who were evaluated before and after six, weekly, one-hour meetings. The experimental group was given instruction in progressive muscular relaxation, meditation, cognitive restructuring, and educational material. The medical students in the experimental group experienced much less test anxiety than the controls without stress-reduction training, and there were other indications that the intervention had helped them learn how to deal with stress more effectively.

In another report, medical students attended 60- to 90-minute sessions weekly for just three weeks. These were interactive group meetings in which instruction was given for three types of stress-reduction strategies. The first was time management, which included goal setting, priority setting, schedule planning and leisure planning. The second was to provide cognitive modification skills to teach the student how to replace tension-related thoughts with others that would decrease their stress. It focused on learning visual imagery procedures, during which they were told to imagine and visualize themselves performing well and calmly in difficult situations. The third was relaxation training, using deep muscle relaxation which was also coupled with relaxing imagery. At each of the sessions, group members discussed how they personally experienced stress and how they were able to apply the specific techniques they had been taught. Group activities of this nature have been shown to provide stress-reduction benefits simply from the social support they provide.

The Society for Professional Well Being, 9-90

"He is the best physician who is the most ingenious inspirer of hope."
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge

More Job Stress from Inadequate Bosses

Add to such sources of modern job stress as computer spying, sexual harassment and sick buildings, the problem of incompetent bosses. According to one study, managers tend to rise to the top because of qualities that may impress their superiors but have little to do with any ability to successfully manage people. At a recent Conference on Occupational Stress, researchers reported on a two-year study which concluded that the "base rate of managerial incompetence in the United States is somewhere between 60 percent and 75 percent." One of the case histories cited the marketing vice president of a hi-tech manufacturing firm who eventually became "derailed." In his interview, he had exhibited a variety of qualities that would clearly have made a very positive impression. According to this most important part of his evaluation, he came across as "bright, imaginative, open minded, forceful, and charismatic." In reality, a more careful, objective psychological assessment showed a "dark side" which would have readily predicted managerial disaster. It revealed that despite the positive impression he had made upon his superiors, he was a "flaky, politically obtuse, showoff who could not be trusted."

Palm Beach Post, 11-17-90

"All that I care to know is that a man is a human being — that is enough for me; he can't be any worse."
 Mark Twain

More Suits for Psychological Stress

As noted in this and previous Newsletters, a court awarded \$5 million to Mark Christian, Rock Hudson's former lover, because of the severe stress sustained after learning that the actor had AIDS. The California Supreme Court has now ruled that passengers could sue for stress suffered when a part broke loose in a Palm Springs cable car they were riding in, killing a fellow rider. They claimed that the emotional stress caused severe anxiety, insomnia, and recurrent nightmares.

US News and World Report, 11-5-90

"The misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never came."

James Russel Lowell

Stress Reduction Effects From Watching Fish

A variety of studies have demonstrated that the presence of a pet or friendly animal can provide stress-reduction benefits. It now appears that viewing a stocked aquarium also has this ability. It is believed that such activities may be mediated by similar pathways as meditation, since both include the presence of an object on which to focus, a quiet environment, a passive attitude, and a comfortable position. According to a National Council for Health Studies report, the elderly represent a segment of the population which is at particularly high risk for stress-related disorders. In a recent study, individuals 62 years of age or older were divided into one of three groups who either watched a fish aquarium, an aquarium videotape, or a placebo videotape. The rationale for including the fish videotape was to introduce a control for real fish watching in order to determine whether contact with something living was essential. All groups were similar in terms of gender and age, each study period lasted for eight minutes, and was offered once a week for three weeks. Stress was evaluated by cardiovascular and musculoskeletal responses including pulse rate, skin temperature, and EMG muscle tension levels.

The researchers found that the aquarium observers tended to show a decrease in pulse rate and muscle tension, and increase in skin temperature. Viewing the aquarium videotape actually appeared to have a superior effect than watching a live fish aquarium or the placebo videotape. Members of all three groups perceived their treatments as relaxing and it was felt that exposure to more than three sessions would have likely provided still further benefits. The results also concluded that the object being viewed need not be alive to provide relaxation benefits. An aquarium videotape might be useful in nursing home populations and other situations where the viewing audience is not able to maintain a live aquarium and health care staff have neither the time nor training to insure this.

Anthrozoön, Vol. 4, pp. 44-48, 1990

"Tranquil pleasures last the longest; we are not fitted to bear the burden of great joys."

Christian Nestell Bovee

Does Watching TV Cause High Cholesterol In Kids?

According to a recent report, high cholesterol in children is strongly linked to the amount of time spent watching television. In general, children watch

television an average of three hours a day. Those who spent two to four hours were 50 percent more likely to have higher cholesterol than those with a less than two-hour exposure. For those in the group who reported watching for more than four hours a day, the likelihood of elevated cholesterol was four times greater.

One explanation that has been offered is that those who spend their time watching TV are less likely to exercise. In addition, TV ads promote high fat, fast foods, and also tend to encourage snacking while sitting in front of the tube. One researcher claimed, that given a family history of high cholesterol or heart attack, he could accurately identify nine out of ten children between the ages of two and twenty who would have elevated cholesterol, without performing any blood tests. Another factor might be the amount of violence in TV programs that kids are apt to watch. This may produce stressful responses and emotions known to increase cholesterol levels.

USA Today, 11-14-90

Stress and Periodontal Disease

Periodontal disease causes destruction of the bone and surrounding dental tissues and is a significant cause of tooth loss in individuals over forty. In the past few decades, a considerable amount of animal research has shown that a variety of stressors including loud noise and bright lights during sleep, exposure to cold, and the administration of cortisone can result in periodontal damage. In humans, numerous attempts have been made to demonstrate relationships between stress and periodontal disease by examining personality variables, psychiatric status, negative life events, broken homes, marital distress, etc. It is believed that stress-related changes in behavior might contribute to the problem in a variety of ways, including a decline in practicing good oral hygiene, increased smoking, use of drugs, sleep disturbances, and faulty diet.

It has been postulated that stress-induced hormones could provide a nutrient atmosphere which favors the growth of pathogenic bacteria in the mouth and also suppress the body's normal immune defenses. Such findings have already been demonstrated in acute necrotizing gingivitis, which is a specific form of periodontal disease. Investigations are also under way to study the relationship between stress and depressed immune function to determine whether this is a more common occurrence in periodontal disease than previously suspected. If confirmed, it might point the way to newer forms of therapy to correct such problems.

Annals of Behavioral Medicine, Vol. 12, pp. 136-137, 1990

Book Reviews • Meetings and Items of Interest

Audiocassette: "Wilderness River Odyssey." Medical and Sports Music Institute of America, Inc., P.O. Box 70681, Eugene, Oregon 97401. \$14.98.

This interesting cassette is recorded in 3D sound and must be listened to with stereo headphones. It represents a one-hour journey down Oregon's Rogue River and is designed to induce a state of relaxation. It differs from other recordings of nature sounds because of both the three dimensional sound and a simulated sensation of motion. A variety of state-of-the-art recording techniques have been employed to achieve this rather unusual effect, creating a feeling of authentic motion and changing scenery, as one senses the rapids approaching then going over them, and hearing them recede. The sensation of periodic rotation on the raft is achieved by cutting edge technology utilizing phase reversing, phase shifting and phase cancellation, which are apparently accomplished during the recording period, rather than by subsequent editing. This recording is of extremely high quality and should prove beneficial for those who wish to achieve a restful state after vigorous exercise, and others who simply want a pleasant way to relax.

Meetings and Items of Interest

Feb. 6-12, Harvard Medical School and Mind/Body Institute Clinical Training in Behavioral Medicine, Boston, MA (617) 432-1525.

Feb. 25-Mar. 1, Physician Heal Thyself, San Diego, CA, University of California School of Medicine. (619) 274-4630.

Feb. 26-Mar. 2, The Art and Science of Health Promotion, Hilton Head, SC, American Journal of Health Promotion, (313) 650-9600.

March 6-9, Association for Academic Psychiatry, Tampa, FL, (617) 499-5198.

March 6-10, Health Communication Research Inst. Mid-Year Health Communication Conference, Monterey, CA (916) 483-1583.

March 14-16, American Psychosomatic Society, Santa Fe, New Mexico, (703) 556-9222.

March 15-20, Assoc. for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, Dallas, TX (303) 422-8436.

March 17-23, American Holistic Medical Association, Breckenridge, CO, (919) 787-5181.

March 20-23, The Society of Behavioral Medicine Twelfth Annual Scientific Sessions, Washington, D.C., (800) 759-5800 or (615) 297-9200.

March 24, Harvard Medical School and Mind/Body Institute Mind Science: A Dialogue between East and West Cambridge, MA (617) 432-1525.

Apr. 1-5, North Carolina Society of Clinical Hypnosis, The California Edge: Psychological Interventions in the 90's. Hypnosis, Family Systems, Mind-Body Healing, Monterey, CA (415) 531-2000.

Apr. 4-5, Univ. of CA Work and Mental Health, San Francisco, CA (415) 476-5208.

Apr. 12, Psychiatry Update, Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., Canada (902) 494-1560.

April 15-19, American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, St. Louis, MO, (708) 297-3317.

Apr. 18, Ruth Fox Course for Addiction for Physicians, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Boston, MA (212) 206-6770.

Apr. 24, Day in Occupational Health, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (406) 525-9140, Ext. 2219.

Apr. 25-28, Psychiatry, Psychology and Psychotherapy Topics, International Transactional Analysis Assoc., Inc., Stamford, CT (203) 322-1400.

May 11-16, American Psychiatric Association, New Orleans, LA, (202) 682-6100.

ISSN # 1047-2517

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