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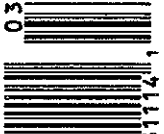
MARCH 1993

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# [PRIVATE time]

## How to sweeten a sour mood

▶ **BAD MOODS MAY BE INEVITABLE—BUT NOT INSURMOUNTABLE.** Here are some unusual ways to beat a bad mood.

- Indulge in the smells of chocolate and apricot.

According to Susan Schiffman, Ph.D., a professor of medical psychology at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, the part of the brain that controls the sense of smell also controls emotions. Smells that trigger a happy emotion

elevate mood. The scent of apricot works because it's a pleasant odor that has no negative connotations for most people. The scent of chocolate is often associated with the good smells of baking—and it triggers the release of mood-lifting endorphins, says Dr. Schiffman.

● Stop ruminating. According to Ralph Erber, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at DePaul University in Chicago, the best way to sweeten a sour mood is to engage in a task that requires concentration—doing a crossword puzzle—rather than a mindless chore (something, he says, women are prone to do). “In a bad mood, people think one depressing thought after another,” explains Dr. Erber. “Doing a demanding activity interrupts the mental process. When the task is completed, you’re not likely to go back to those negative thoughts.”

● Listen to bird songs. “Pleasant, high-pitched sounds increase serotonin levels in the brain, which brings you up,” says John Beaulieu, a sound therapist and director of the Polarity Wellness Center in New York City. “Bird songs are wonderful for this.” According to Barbara Crowe, a music therapist at Arizona State University, repetitive sounds—those with the same seven or eight beats per second (e.g., a drum roll)—also improve mood by producing slower brain waves and hence, a more relaxed mood.

## A mentor for private time

● **YOU'RE ALREADY familiar with career mentors—those special people who help you navigate work-force waters. But what about private-time mentors—those who inspire us with their enjoyment of time alone?**

“Using leisure time well isn’t easy, especially if you’re career driven,” says Witold Ryzczynski, author of *Waiting for the Weekend*. “Sometimes we need advice and encouragement from others.”

Jill had a boss who was both a career and private-time mentor. “She encouraged me to use up all my vacation time, to always recharge myself,” says Jill. “She taught me early on that you have to have a life outside the office.”

Says Beth, “My 74-year-old mom will take off for the weekend without my dad to go bird-watching, and she’s started up two successful volunteer projects in her town. Her motto: ‘Bored people are boring. Find a passion.’”

Private-time mentors sometimes give you “permission” to do what interests you. “I love art but always felt insecure about my abilities,” says Cara. “A couple of artist friends encouraged me to paint. They reminded me that hobbies don’t have to be professional—just fun.”

“I have a friend whose passion is photography and travel,” says Libbie. “She just took off to Antarctica, alone, to photograph penguins. It inspired me to be more adventurous with my pastimes.”

## Coffeehouse conversation by computer

■ **COFFEEHOUSES are the perfect private-time hideout—great for daydreaming, people watching, eavesdropping. Now some coffeehouses in northern California have added an extra perk: the opportunity to converse with total strangers via a tabletop computer terminal.**

Fifty cents lets you into the world of the San Francisco Network

(SF NET), where people around the country (all with code names like Kat Eyes and Jungle Goddess)

complain about their bosses, debate politics or wax poetic about their love lives.

“SF NET enables me to express my ideas even when I’m in the mood to be alone,” says Edith Alderette, a veterinary technician and student in the San Francisco Bay area.

Wayne Gregori, the creator of SF NET, hopes to expand the network to cafés throughout the United States. But until that happens, anyone with a home computer and modem can subscribe to SF NET for a monthly fee. Says one woman who does: “I can sit around at home with mayonnaise in my hair and cold cream on my face and still be social.”

