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THE selfjournal

NOVEMBER 1996 THIS MONTH'S NEWS

IN HEALTH, NUTRITION, FITNESS, MEDICINE, BEAUTY AND STYLE

bodymind

EARTHQUAKE!
HURRICANE!
HEART ATTACK!

Studies show that urban disasters may wreak havoc on our mental and physical health.

When tragedy strikes, we regroup, recoup and move on, but our bodies may well break down—so report scientists studying several well-known urban disasters. Their research shows that long after order is restored, residents may suffer ill health—and perhaps even depression.

Two as-yet-unpublished studies focus on recent natural disasters: the 1994 Northridge, California, earthquake and Hurricane Andrew, which hit Miami in 1992. Both evaluated the distress levels of a number

of residents via interviews, questionnaires and blood samples. The participants were reassessed several times in the ensuing months. Although levels of distress had decreased dramatically, immune function had continued to decline; subjects reported developing more colds and sore throats. Not surprisingly, the drop in immunity was worst among those who had suffered the most destruction of property and disruption of daily life. But even two years after Hurricane Andrew, the victims'



immune systems functioned less well than they did two months after the storm. "Rebuilding and relocating can take months or years," points out George Solomon, M.D., a psychiatrist at the University of California—Los Angeles and head of the earthquake study.

Losing a house can be heartbreaking, but losing a



Tragedy takes a toll on our bodies as well as our minds—even long after order is restored.

leader may break the heart, a third study found. Focusing retrospectively on the impact of President John F. Kennedy's 1963 assassination on the health of Dallas residents, researchers
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Spicy sinus remedies

Eating **one teaspoonful to one tablespoonful of grated, fresh horseradish** can help relieve sinus headaches,

says naturopathic physician Mary L. Bove, N.D., who practices in Brattleboro, Vermont. A generous sprinkling of fresh cayenne pepper on foods also helps clear up congestion.

Extra!

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT, ROBERT TARDIO, ADRIAN DE LUCCA, LEONARDO CASALI, DAVIES & STARR; BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT, REUTERS/CORBIS-BETTMAN; ARCHIVE PHOTOS; BILL GENTILE/SIPA PRESS.

Heart Attack!

Continued from page 45

found that deaths from heart disease—which were declining nationwide—actually increased by 4 percent in that city for five years following the event. In addition, suicides soared 20 percent after the tragedy and didn't stabilize until two years later. Finally, Dallas dwellers felt humiliated in the nation's eyes after newspapers proclaimed their place of residence "the city of hate." Some natives attending colleges in other states transferred because of harassment; many lied and said they were from Houston. And it wasn't until 1970 that rates of heart disease-related deaths in Dallas were comparable to those in the rest of the nation. With one exception: Memphis, which had a higher death rate due to heart disease in the years following Martin Luther King's assassination there.

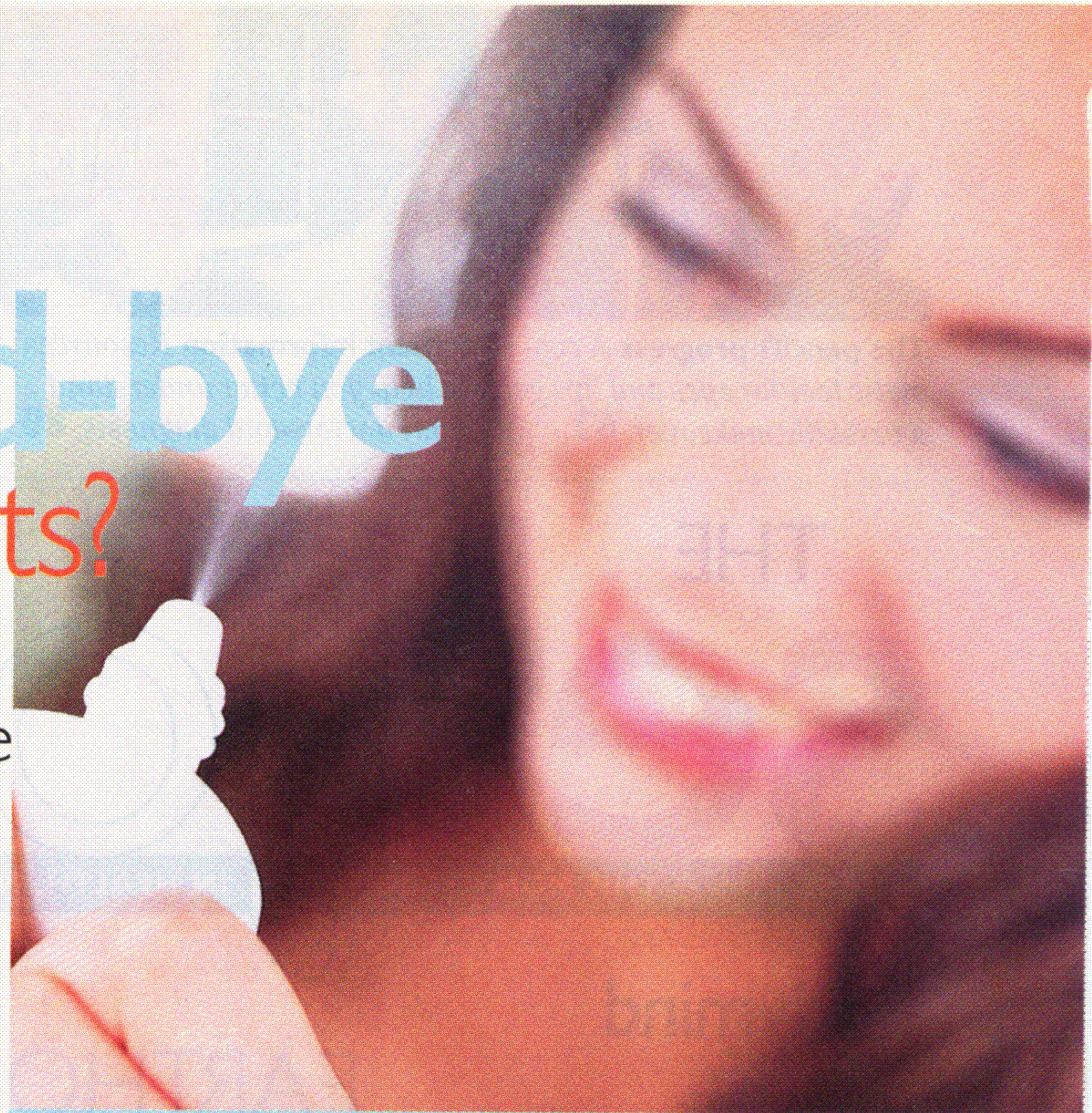
—Kathleen McAuliffe

Good-bye to flu shots?

Finally, a painless—and possibly more effective—vaccine.

Now is the time to make an appointment for your annual flu shot. With any luck, it could be your last. Researchers have begun the first large-scale trial of a new nasal-spray vaccine, potentially eliminating the painful injection for most people. (Those with compromised immune systems will still need the traditional shot.) What's more, the vaccine could last up to two flu seasons instead of just one and might prove to be even more effective.

The nasal vaccine is made from live viruses that have



Forget the sting: Getting a flu shot may soon be as painless as squirting a spray into your nose. Better yet, the new vaccine could protect you for two years.

been genetically weakened, instead of those that have been killed, says Wendy Keitel, M.D., an assistant professor of microbiology/immunology and medicine who is leading the research effort at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Although it may bring on cold

symptoms lasting a few days, Dr. Keitel claims that the long-term benefit is worthwhile: The weakened-virus vaccine seems to trigger an immune response more closely resembling that which occurs following actual infection, possibly resulting in greater effectiveness than the current vaccine. It may also confer immunity to a broader variety of flu strains, thus providing longer protection. And because the vaccine is delivered through the nose, where the flu takes hold, it may be able to fight the virus more vigorously.

Keitel and scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that the spray would also be simpler to give to children, who tend to contract the flu easily and spread it to those most in danger of dying from it—the elderly and those with compromised immune systems. Given that some 20,000 Americans die every year from flu complications, this new vaccine could be a lifesaver.

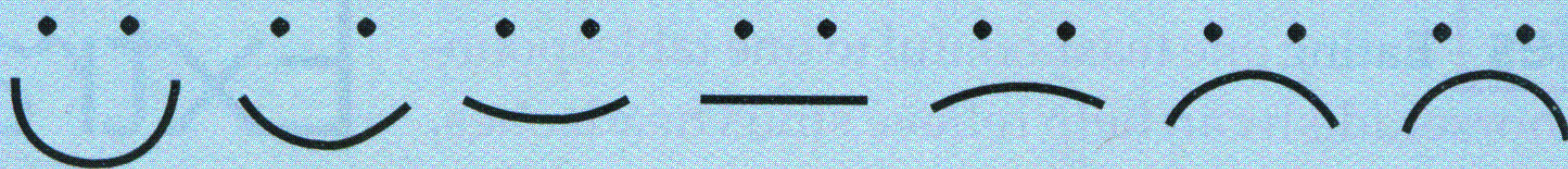
—Phil Scott

ITEM I'm HAPPY, you're HAPPY

Despite our undeniable penchant for whining, moaning and complaining, the Prozac generation is, by and large, a remarkably content lot. Over the past two decades, researchers have surveyed thousands of people around the globe about their level of happiness. Some have asked participants to agree or disagree with statements such as "the conditions of my life are excellent." Others have handed out beepers to assess mood (including sadness) at random times throughout the day. But one of the most effective techniques, which has been used by

University of Michigan researchers, involves asking people to identify with happy-face drawings (*below*). Though the survey methods have been diverse, the results have been consistent. According to the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, which has quizzed 1,500 Americans every year since 1972, nine out of 10 are "pretty happy" or "very happy." And the journal *Psychological Science* reports that the majority of respondents in 43 nations say they're more satisfied than dissatisfied with their lives. —Kathleen McAuliffe

Measuring Your Mood



On average, which face would you say best illustrates your disposition? Check one. And have a nice day.

Faces reprinted with permission from Plenum Press. Source: *Social Indicators of Well-Being*, by Frank M. Andrews and Stephen P. Withey (Plenum Press, 1976).

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBERT TARDIO. HAIR AND MAKEUP: NANCY SPRAGUE FOR IVY BERNHARD.