


MICHELLE PAULMAN

Dentists and PMS: An odd pair

You've seen those commercials, the ones where they take two things that shouldn't go together and put them together and then show what happens.

Weights and skates.
Wet paint and new suits.
Dentists and PMS.



The scene unfolds with screams filling the waiting room, where the receptionist cringes in terror. Pan to the examining room, where the female dentist is torturing her doe-eyed patient with a large, scary dental apparatus and Barry Manilow Muzak. She laughs insidiously over the whine of a rusty drill. Whirrrrrrr, haaaaa ha ha ha!

Only a commercial, you say? Well, not even that—a figment of my imagination, a concept borne out of two things I dread but that I am forced to deal with on a regular basis.

Webster's Third College Edition defines PMS as "premenstrual syndrome—a group of physical and emotional symptoms that may precede a menstrual period, as fluid retention, fatigue, depression, irritability, etc."

Webster might as well say the Sears Tower is a big building in Chicago.

Nobody can really understand PMS because it is different things to different people. And having it can range from mildly inconvenient to sheer hell.

Like going to the dentist.

Dentists and PMS should NOT go together under any circumstances, even if the dentist is male and therefore incapable of having PMS.

His patient might have PMS.

Since I'm a regular sufferer, PMS is a handy excuse for any sudden, inexplicable outbursts or mood changes.

Like when I was visiting the dentist.

When I walked into the office to have my wisdom teeth extracted, I was jovial. Nervous, but jovial.

After he yanked my teeth and I regained consciousness, I was still jovial, despite the fact that I had two pounds of blood-soaked gauze in my mouth.

I went home and, thanks in part to pain killers, was still jovial until one morning when I returned to the dentist and lost my happy thoughts.

I attribute my downfall to PMS.

When I woke up in the wee hours that morning, I was in great pain but not greatly upset, more like mildly peeved. I popped a pain pill and went back to sleep with the intention of seeing the dentist as soon as possible.

Later, I drove to the office in an upbeat, yet fearful, state of mind. The pills had worn off, and I felt like some sadist, or some dentist, had been at work in my mouth with sharp instruments.

My fear grew as I entered the building and made my way to the dentist's office. I covered as I opened the door. Muzak was playing.

I was ushered back to a deceptively plush but torturous seat from the Spanish Inquisition. I was made to lean back at an impossible angle, causing all the blood to rush to my wounds. Oh, the agony.

Then the fiendish hygienist told me the news: I had dry sockets.

My fear changed to guilt and sorrow. Where had I gone wrong? I had followed the instructions to the letter. OK, I ate one corn chip to show off, but that was all. Why me? Why did I deserve such a cruel fate? Oh, the inhumanity of it all.

But the cruelty had just begun.

The hygienist snipped my stitches so as to fill my sockets with stuff that looks, tastes and smells like those strange little flatworms your high school biology teacher kept in formaldehyde to freak squeamish students out.

She told me to open.

I lost it.

While the stuffing procedure hurt less than, say, childbirth, it was enough to bring tears to my eyes. Lots of tears.

When the dentist came in to "see

how we're doing," he found me sobbing in the chair, unable to explain why I was reacting in such a way. Sure, it hurt, but not THAT bad. I'm a mature adult most of the time.

I told him my tears were due to "other circumstances" and choked them back as best as I could.

So I sat and snarfed while he told me I should drink some Coke to get rid of the taste and come back later in the week.

Come back. Oh, the injustice.

I should have been relieved to escape that place, but when I made it to my car, the waterworks started again. After many minutes I sat up and asked myself: "Why the hell am I crying?"

And I didn't know.

I wasn't in pain anymore; the dressing had not only numbed my sockets but most of my mouth. Sure, the taste was icky, but it wasn't intolerable. And now I could spend the rest of the day in bed.

Upon realizing that I no longer had a reason for my outburst, the tears dried and I went home feeling sullen and a little stupid.

Later that day, after a good nap, my happy thoughts returned, icky taste in my mouth or not.

I can no more explain my emotional roller coaster ride that day than I can tell you why I sometimes crave chocolate with such force that I would sell my mother for it, or why I sometimes want to shave my head so I will no longer have to fight with it in the morning.

My body's chemistry must have a mind of its own.

PMS is an easier, cheaper and probably more fitting excuse for my inexplicable behavior than sitting on a psychiatrist's couch and going over my childhood traumas for a mere \$75 an hour.

Psychiatry and PMS shouldn't go together anyway.

PMS shouldn't go with anything. Except chocolate.


Paulman is a senior news-editorial and history major, and a photographer and columnist for the Daily Nebraskan.

JON BRUNING

Perot's problems outweigh assets

Say it ain't so.

The quitter himself Ross Perot said Tuesday he "made a mistake" by not pursuing his independent campaign for president. Coupled with his myriad of television appearances last Friday, including the "Today" show, "The MacNeil Lehrer News-Hour" and "Nightline," it looks like the little billionaire is ready to rejoin the race.



Perot continues to claim that he will let his supporters, especially the volunteer organizers of his various ballot petition drives, decide whether he should "officially" enter the race. Since he is now on the ballot in all 50 states, that decision is easily made.

Perhaps more important to Perot's possible return is the bruising his ego and reputation took after he dropped out of the race in July. The Texas tough guy essentially proved by withdrawing that he was thin-skinned and unable to handle the media spotlight—not to mention indecisive.

The money Perot has spent thus far in the campaign also might be a reason for his return. After spending more than \$18 million he probably wants to wield at least a little bit of influence. As a non-candidate that influence is more or less nonexistent. True, \$18 million is peanuts to a billionaire. But Perot, like any businessperson, wants to see some return on his investment.

This is not to say the entire Perot campaign hinged on the candidate's ego or checkbook. There were plenty of things to admire. His supporters, for example, were deeply committed to change and interested in better government. It was a grass-roots movement, idealistic and hopeful that Perot had the clearest vision of a greater America.

The candidate himself also warrants some respect. His efforts on

behalf of prisoners of war in the late '60s and early '70s were more than admirable. His stance on the budget, although somewhat hackneyed, is the only plan that clearly addresses the problem. Perot specifically outlined deep spending cuts and tax increases on gasoline, Medicare, Social Security and upper-bracket incomes that would have saved more than \$750 billion in five years.

Unfortunately, Perot's solution would be nearly impossible to implement. Few legislators are prepared to ask elderly constituents to give up a substantial portion of their Medicare and Social Security benefits.

For many other reasons, however, Perot is not the answer to this country's ills. He has proven himself insensitive to various groups, especially blacks and women.

In a July speech to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for example, Perot offended a number of those in the audience by referring to "your people" and "you people."

Perot has been equally callous toward women. He forbade above-the-knee skirts for women who worked for his company, Electronic Data Services. If a woman wanted to wear slacks, even on an especially cold day, she needed to have permission.

Perot's indecisiveness is also well-documented. In 1955, only two years after his graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Perot asked to be relieved from active duty two years early. He has given no less than four separate explanations for his request.

First, he claimed his obligation was only two years instead of the standard four. He thought four-year obligations were instituted in wartime only.

Second, he has said the navy's promotion system was not based on merit. He said in 1971 that promotions partially based on length of service were "just sort of incompatible with my desire to be measured and

judged by what I could produce."

Third, Perot wrote in 1955 to his congressman that life aboard his ship was full of swearing and promiscuity and deeply offended him.

Fourth, he has claimed that the lax morals of his captain were offensive. He said the captain demanded liquor from the ship's medicinal stores while they were at sea and used the ship's recreation funds to redecorate his cabin. The captain, of course, vehemently denied any such activities. Perot never did receive early release and was forced to finish his assignment with the rest of his classmates.

Perot shouldn't be discounted as a person or a leader solely for wanting to end his service prematurely.

He can, however, be criticized for floundering around with four separate explanations for why he tried to get out.

When Perot was in the campaign he continually avoided responding to substantive questions by dodging situations in which he could be cross-examined about his beliefs. Aside from the budget, he answered questions with only the vaguest of generalities and attacked those who demanded more specific responses.

The public deserves to know more than Perot told us about the ideas of someone who is running for the nation's highest office.

Ross Perot should stay out of the race. He has shown himself to be both unwilling and unable to deal with concrete issues and the media scrutiny that accompany the public's desire to know what he believes. If he won't tell us what he believes, or doesn't know himself, he wouldn't be a good president.

Perot's supporters are on the right track. Change in government is badly needed. Ross Perot, however, doesn't have the candor or decisiveness to be that beacon of change.

Bruning is a second-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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