

# A little goes a long way

## Moderation is method to enjoying life responsibly



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I read a book about fun and paranoia recently. It's called "The Pleasure Police," by David Shaw, and it's interesting stuff. The first chapter alone really caught my attention with the following quote:

"How extraordinary!" wrote the late political scientist Aaron Wildavsky. "The richest, longest-lived, best protected, most resourceful civilization, with the highest degree of insight into its own technology, is on its way to becoming the most frightened."

He's talking about us, folks. We're in a unique period of history. No society has existed before like our own. No society has had so much leisure, so much

knowledge at its fingertips, so much flat out going for it.

And yet we're so whiny, and more than a little scared.

We spend our days obsessing over the latest threat to our incredibly expanded life spans. Everywhere we turn, we hear people screaming at us about the latest threat to our minds, bodies or ways of life. And these threats have an underlying message: This will kill you.

Which is a blatant exaggeration. Yes, there are many things out there that could potentially shorten your life span. Some of the perpetrators are fairly new on the scene, like the lists of carcinogens which seem to grow every day. Others are more ancient, like sex and alcohol.

Some of them are a serious problem, others are exaggerated. For example, just because it has been discovered that such and such a chemical can cause cancer in lab rats doesn't mean that it's a noticeable risk. The doses used to cause that cancer are usually way beyond what you'll be exposed to in a lifetime.

Ah, but then there's the more commonly touted "this will kill you" trio of alcohol, sex and any

kind of food which tastes remotely good. Some of this comes to us from self-proclaimed health experts, and a lot of it from self-proclaimed morality experts.

We're talking about going way beyond warnings to be careful. "Abstain or die" is their rallying cry.

It's a wonder how little we hear of one simple word: moderation. Moderation is a neat thing. It's not unrealistic or "boring" like abstinence, and it's not blatantly stupid like gluttony.

If you have a couple of drinks, it's OK. If you have sex with a monogamous partner and use some simple birth control, you'll probably be fine. If you have a thick, juicy steak or a two-dimensional, charred McDonald's hamburger every once in awhile, no big deal.

It's not going to kill you.

Another interesting thing about moderation is it teaches you stuff like alcohol, sex and tasty food aren't bad things. We tend to demonize what can harm us, which takes the responsibility away from ourselves.

It's abuse that's the problem, not the item or act itself.

"This will kill you." No. Let's put that in a more objective, less reactionary fashion. This *can* kill you. This *might* kill you. But you're alive right now, and most of us have a pretty good chance at staying that way for quite some time, just as long as we take simple, reasonable precautions.

But we take little comfort in that. We're paranoid, plain and simple. We enjoy complaining, and we are fascinated by disaster.

I'm not saying that there is no cause for concern. By no means. There are some horrible diseases out there which can lead to either a quick death or a miserably short life. Even more important, we do some pretty stupid things that put our lives and the lives of those around us in danger, things which can be avoided by no or minor inconvenience.

But by focusing only on what can threaten us, we may actually be doing our health a disservice. As sociologist Barry Glassner once put it, "Don't people realize ... every scientific study shows that the single best thing you can do for your health is have fun?"

"Great!" says the reader. "That means we should go out

and get completely plastered, right?"

(dead silence)  
Come here. Just a little closer ... that's it. Now lean forward ... WHACK!

What did I say about moderation, hmm? Please tell me how you can define fun as blowing large amounts of money every weekend so that you can become intimate friends with a toilet bowl?

I know, I know. There's more to it than that, otherwise why would you do it? Watching a videotape of yourself being drunk is somewhat like looking back at the '80s: You know it was stupid, you looked like a complete idiot, but damn it, you sure seemed to have been having fun at the time.

So don't get me wrong; I firmly believe everybody should have the chance to act like a slobbering moron every once in awhile. It's good for the soul. But there are other things to do, things which won't result in sizable gaps in your memory.

"Things like wild, promiscuous sex?"

You really want to get me in trouble, don't you?

# Pestering problems

## Marching mice, saboteur squirrels invade helpless home



**STEVE WILLEY** is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Anybody who has ever been to my immaculate home will probably have a difficult time believing what I'm about to say: I've got a pest problem.

Well, not me personally, unless of course you want to count the ant farm I recently uncovered in one of my nostrils.

What I meant to say is that my house has a pest problem, and it's getting pretty damn serious. Let me try to paint a picture of just how serious it is.

First, I want you to close your eyes and think of every possible pest you've ever heard of. Of course I want you to think of the common ones, but don't exclude pests like gophers, dingoes and Richard Simmons.

Next, I'd like you to squeeze your eyes together a little harder and imagine all of the animals under the same roof.

Finally, picture these pests not only happily living together, but actually getting along so well that they often hold huge beer-swilling poker games. They tell jokes and stay up until the wee hours of the morning. And if I dare come down from the bedroom to ask them to quiet down, I'm pelted with Ruffles potato chips and, sometimes, feces!

(I should note, however, that the doody is usually only thrown when I interrupt and one of the dung beetles is sitting on a royal flush.)

And the sad thing is, I'm only slightly exaggerating. Twice now,

I've come home from school to find Marlin Perkins from "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" filming a new episode in my kitchen.

And hear this: I am not some spoiled rich kid who grew up in a home that never knew the occasional pest. In Mississippi, we had flying cockroaches a foot long. And if my father happened to be bored that day, I was fortunate enough to witness a drunk goat staggering through the living room.

But it has gotten to the point now where I am actually physically competing for food in my home. And that's one thing I won't stand for.

My landlord has done nothing about the problem. "It's an old house," he says. "You could exterminate in there until you grow a third leg; it won't do any good. Besides, the bugs pay rent on time."

But you see, bugs I can handle. Hell, I can even tolerate the battalions of mice that randomly march through my bedroom.

After all, those things are supposed to be

pests. The pests I really hate are the birds and squirrels, and I'm not talking about the gentle ones you might find in a tree. No, these animals live inside my home.

I swear I'm not making this up.

Let's play a real-life game involving one of my roommates, shall we? One day my roommate woke up in the morning only to find a cooing pigeon resting comfortably on his chest.

He should: a) ask the pigeon to get him some Skittles, b) ask the pigeon if it gets any satisfaction from crapping on automobiles, or c) pat the pigeon on the head and go back to sleep as this is not uncommon in my home.

You know the answer, I'm sure.

Those damn birds have built retirement communities in my home.

There are so many eggs in my attic that I constantly have to shoo raiding foxes out of there with a broom.

And the squirrels aren't any better. For the past year, a family has taken up residency in the crawl space between the attic floor and the ceiling. And you wouldn't believe how noisy they are! I am fully convinced that Iraq is subcontracting the squirrels in my home to build nuclear weapons under America's nose. It honestly sounds like they're cutting through concrete with a chain saw.

And there are so many of them that the ceilings in our bedrooms have begun to buckle and crack from the weight. In one room, a small hole has developed. The squirrels often drop a straightened coat hanger through the hole and slide down it like firemen. They then proceed to squirt themselves with cologne, grab a nudie magazine and scurry back up the pole.

It's really affecting our mood around the house because no

one is able to get more than two hours of sleep each night. It's just too noisy.

Even my sound-sleeping roommate has trouble catching a wink. It's not because of the noise, but because he keeps having the same reoccurring nightmare in which 3 tons of chestnuts smash through the ceiling and smother him.

Now you might be thinking, "Steve, if the pests are such a problem, why don't you just call an exterminator?"

Believe me, I've tried. The few that have shown up fled my home so wildly that they knocked themselves unconscious when they smacked into the house across the street.

And I've been told, after visiting my home, none of the exterminators has been able to work successfully since.

Therefore I'm forced to handle the pest control. And luckily for me, I have had some experience in this field. You see, I took several pesticide classes back when I was an ag-journalism major.

By the way, for those of you who don't know, ag journalism is a major in which people are trained to properly report the various rapes and murders committed by cattle.

So through these classes, I've learned the weaknesses of these pests. For example, how many of you knew rats can't stand Bon Jovi music? And if you accuse a cricket of eating pancakes, it'll immediately commit suicide.

But even with all of my training, I couldn't remember how to kill birds and squirrels.

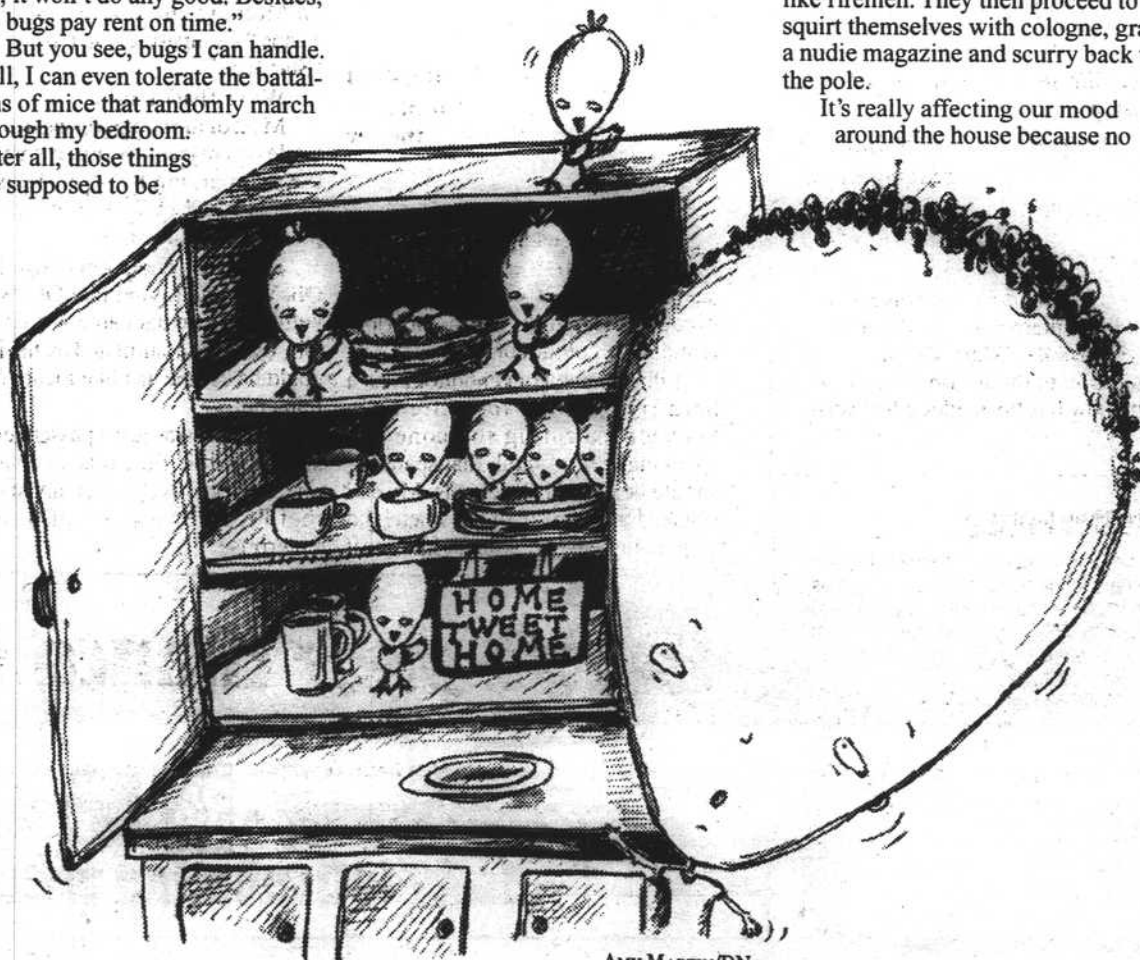
So here I sit.

Maybe if I tell them they're fat, lazy and I wish they had never been born, they'll leave home. After all, it worked on me when my father said it.

Anything's worth a shot.

At this point, I'm not above settling for a peace treaty that requires my residing in the bathroom for the rest of my putrid life.

Just as long as it's pest-free.



AMY MARTIN/DN