

HEALTHY LIVING

Upbeat & Coping

Positive mental outlook a top strategy these days

BY JAMIE GUMBRECHT
Cox News Service

Ed Caldwell has been through the wringer in the past year. His business tanked along with his retirement portfolio and the value of his home. He was diagnosed with cancer, a disease that killed his oldest brother in December, and which a brother-in-law is battling now, too, just as he is.

And he's begun taking care of his mother and in-laws while trying to start a new business "when all the economic news is terrible and there's a pervasive sense of angst."

Yet Caldwell, 58, is optimistic, which makes him decidedly different, according to all the polls, from the vast majority of Americans.

So how could he be upbeat when gloom is at or near record highs, President Barack Obama is warning of tougher times ahead and the news is bad?

"If I let all of it get to me, I'd be out on the street or on a psychiatrist's couch or drunk somewhere," said Caldwell, a corporate training consultant. "I'm coping by focusing on the good things, like my daughter's upcoming marriage."

And his new business — online fee-based coaching with an upbeat message and a WhyDriveYourselfCrazy.com Web site —



Christopher Barry of Atlanta, who lost his magazine job, has a goal of working in New York. He takes long walks in the park to clear his mind.

which aims to help people think positively.

"It uses the techniques of cognitive psychology to change your way of thinking," he said. "It teaches ways to take control, how to reinvent yourself."

That's exactly what millions of people are trying to do, but for most, it's not as easy as it is for Caldwell, who relieves his stress by exercising in his home gym, boating and swimming.

One recent morning, for example, several dozen shell-shocked men and women gathered at the Varsity restaurant in Kennesaw, Ga., where the aroma of chili dogs and fresh coffee couldn't even begin to pierce the gloom. At least not until Ted Daywalt, 59-year-old president of Vet-Jobs Inc., which finds work for veterans, began an upbeat talk to people who have lost jobs or homes or both.

"Your job is to find another full-time job, and you can do it if you try," said Daywalt at the meeting of job seekers. "You shouldn't feel embarrassed. It's not your fault you're out of work. Just never give up."

He offered pointers on résumé-writing and stressed the importance of networking.

His words sounded like advice from on high to Lynnette and Jim Raposa, a couple whose income has dwindled by more than half, and who lost their home to foreclosure in the mortgage meltdown.

"There's a great deal of angst in not knowing when the other shoe is going to drop," said Raposa, 46. "I've never seen an economic cycle where people are sticking their heads in the sand like this. There's a bunker mentality. People are afraid."

Raposa has made a living for years doing audio commercials, mostly for auto dealers, "not a great sector to be in right now" because many have gone bankrupt.

Lynnette says the couple has turned to the Bible and their church to help cope. They both got real estate licenses just before the housing bubble burst.



HYOSUB SHIN / COX NEWS SERVICE

To relax for an hour or two, Ed Caldwell hops into a boat he keeps on the small lake behind his Duluth, Ga., home. Caldwell, recently diagnosed with cancer, is starting a new business while caring for his mother and in-laws.

"We lost our house in 2007, a foreclosure, and went through bankruptcy," she said. "It's very humbling."

"I live every day knowing I am a child of God. He loves me no matter what. I have God, I have my faith, and I have family and friends who I can even laugh with from time to time."

Others, like Christopher Barry, 26, turn to other sources of inspiration, in his case, the late gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson.

Barry, who lost his job as a magazine editor in March, hopes one day to be able to save enough to move to New York to pursue a career there.

"To deal with all this, I work out at home, take long walks and don't waste money," he said. "I'll sit on a bench at the park, looking at the lake."

But every ripple in the water is a reminder of the moving hurdles he must clear.

And while many are turning to spiritual leaders, others are turning to spirits.

Dr. Nancy Molitor, a professor of psychiatry at Northwestern University in Chi-

cago, says there's reason to believe many are turning to booze.

"There is some data out there that supports the connection between increased alcohol sales and recessions," she said. "I am certainly seeing this more in my practice, as are my other psychologist colleagues. People seem to be drinking more ... to soothe themselves from the stress."

Dr. Richard Winer, a Roswell, Ga., psychiatrist, said, "This is the worst period of anxiety I've seen in my patients since at least 9/11. There's just a big black cloud over everything. And everyone is wondering, 'Will it get worse?'"

Dr. Darvin Hege, an Atlanta psychiatrist, says many of his patients who still have jobs "are very concerned they'll lose them. I've practiced psychiatry through numerous recessions, but I've never seen anything like this."

Caldwell's business partner, Dr. Laurie Nadel of New York, says people who are jobless often feel shame, but shouldn't.

"It's not their fault," she says. ■

Gym rats, newbies need to share

BY VIKKI CONWELL
Cox News Service

No pain, no gain? Try snagging your favorite piece of equipment at the gym these days.

Right now, gyms are packed with regular members returning more frequently and a slew of newcomers making good on their get-fit, weight-loss resolutions. More than a million new warm bodies flock to fitness centers after the new year begins, representing a 12 percent increase in membership, according to the International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association.

Unfortunately for the gyms, most of these "resolutionaries" will disappear by March. But for the irritated regulars, that's exercise music to their ears.

So what's a gym rat to do until the larger crowds and longer waits subside?

Don't let it bother you, said Kip Mat-

thews, an Athens, Ga., psychologist who says a sense of entitlement about using your favorite piece of equipment at a designated time is unhealthy.

"The newcomer doesn't know your routine, and perhaps you just need to change it up for a while," he said.

That's what fitness experts recommend, too. Mondays and Tuesdays are among the busiest days, so arrive at a different time and try new pieces of equipment. Consider taking a class, running or playing basketball.

When Jennifer Uboh of Atlanta joined Workout Anytime last January, the educator had little experience using the equipment but received help from fellow members and trainers. She now works out four to five days a week on the treadmill, stationary bike and climber and also does some light weights.

Changing one's lifestyle and going to the gym requires a big commitment, so



JOEY IVANSO / COX NEWS SERVICE

The first months of the year are usually the most crowded at the gym.

newcomers should be welcomed, said Donald Loft, an Atlanta corporate attorney who has worked out five days a week for the past 18 years at City Club.

"It's a little bit of self-righteousness

on the part of the gym rats to look down on the newcomers," he said. "Everybody has a first day at the gym, and theirs just happens to be in January." ■